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RESTS BY THE RIVER

Devotional Meditations

BY

GEORGE MATHESON
D.D., LL.D., F.R.S.E.

HODDER & STOUGHTON
NEW YORK
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PREFACE

THESE meditations appeared originally in the pages of *Saint Andrew*, an organ of the Church of Scotland. They are intended for devotional moments; but by devotional moments I do not mean moments of vacuity. It is not in its season of intellectual barrenness that the soul yields its spiritual fruit. Religious sentiment, if it is worth anything, must be preceded by religious perception. According, I have divided each of these pieces into two parts —the first containing a thought and the second either an invocation or a prayer; the whole piece may be read in three minutes. This is the age of brevity, and I have tried to put intensity in the place of extension. The appeals are to various moods of mind; if some of them should find their way into hearts that have been un-

consciously waiting for their message, the aim of this book will have been abundantly achieved. I find that, without any design on my part, there are two readings per week for one year; perhaps, in life's storm and stress, our "Rests by the River" do not occur more frequently.

G. M.

EDINBURGH,
1906.

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I

LIGHT BEFORE SHADOW

"A new heart also will I give you. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways."—EZEK. xxxvi. 26, 31.

WHAT a singularly subtle thought! Only an inspired book could have conceived it. The prophet says that the memory of our badness only comes after we have become good. "A new heart will I give you; *then* shall ye remember your own evil ways." One would have expected the opposite statement. We should have looked for such words as these: "You must expect for a little to be troubled with old memories. You must not be surprised, when you are in the first stage of reformation, to experience the remorse of conscience for bad deeds in the past. When your new nature is complete, when the weaning process is over, when you become accustomed to the corn of the land, you will forget all about your struggles and failures; you will

remember your shortcomings no more." The prophet says it is only then you *will* remember them. He says the valleys of your life will not become visible until you have scaled the height and stood upon the mountain's brow. And truly he is right; experience cries "Amen!" The memory of sin is the latest gift of my Father. His earliest gifts are incentives to move forward; they rather discourage a retrospective view. God says to the beginner, "Forget the things which are behind; press toward the mark of the prize!" But when the mark of the prize is won, when the top of the hill is gained, then for the first time He says, "Look back!" Then, for the first time, memory wakes, and our yesterday appears; and the valley of the past looks lowly and the shadows of the past seem deep. We beat upon our breast and say, "O wretched man that I am!"

Lord, in my hour of remorseful memory, let me remember this! Let me remember that the pain of my bad deed is only felt by the new heart. Often I cry with the hymnist, "Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord?" Teach me that it is quite natural there should be more blessedness *at first!* Help me to enter into the comfort of the thought that the burden of yesterday

is reserved for the *pure* soul! Reveal to my troubled spirit that my sense of distance from Thee grows with my nearness! I never seem to follow Thee so far off as when I am within the grounds of Thy house with many mansions. Let me measure my nearness by my pain! When the debts of yesterday oppress me, when the shadows of my past appal me, when the deeds of my dead days rise up for judgment in my soul, tell me that the vision means, not war, but peace! Tell me that the haze upon my morning is summer heat, not winter's gloom! Tell me it is the *resurrection* body that makes me sensitive to pain! Tell me I feel to-day what I felt not yesterday because to-day I have received a new heart—received more power to feel! I can bear the burden of the past if to bear it means nearness to Thee.

II

THE POWER OF FIRST ASSOCIATIONS

"On the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither."—Acts xvi. 13.

THE disciples went to hold a religious meeting outside the town; they came to the river side. Why? Because it was a place of solitude? No; because it was a place of prayer in former days. I do not think solitude is favourable to worship; I do not think the river side so apt to kindle enthusiasm as the crowded assembly. But, whether in town or country, I think the spot of past associations has the advantage over every other spot. When we come to middle life, the life of the great city, there are times when our main attraction to religion is simply the power of past association. Many a man whose intellectual faith is shattered is bound to Christ by the memories of childhood—by seeing the

place "where prayer was wont to be made." It is a great argument for the early association of religion with joy. If the religion of our childhood has been happy—if the Sabbath school has been pleasant, if the teachers have been loved—it will be very hard to tear up these roots in manhood. When the clouds gather round your mature reason you will go back to the place "where prayer was wont to be made"—to the joyous group now separated and silent that met round the family altar, to the village choir of happy voices, to the Christmas-tree laden with gifts for the Child-Jesus. When the woodman is about to cut down an old tree, you remember that in youth it sheltered you, and you bid him forbear. So with the creed of the Cross. A thousand voices cry, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground!" But a still small voice answers, "Prayer was wont to be made here in the long long ago; for the sake of memory let us keep the foliage green!"

My brother, plant early the tree by the river of living waters! Let the religion of your children be from the first linked with gladness! If you put their tree by the river side in youth, they will sit by the river side in manhood also. The tree may be battered and bent—struck by the lightning, ravaged by

the storm; but to them it will be ever green —green with the light of memory. Let your children have a place of which in the days to come they shall say, "Prayer was wont to be made here!" Plant early their tree, and let it be a Christmas-tree—a joyous tree! Plant it where the waters spring; plant it where the woodnotes ring; plant it where the breezes sing! Lay it among the flowers; shrine it among the bowers; tend it in the golden hours! Let no cypress come near it; let no willow touch it; let no thorn impede its opening way! Thorns will come in the afternoon; but keep them from the morning! Gild in the sunshine life's opening door; encircle with music life's dawning day! There will be clouds by and by, there will be discords by and by; but, when the clouds and discords meet your children on the river side, they will remember the old tree where prayer was wont to be made.

III

CHRIST THE REVEALER OF SIN

"Thou hast set our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance."—Psa. xc. 8.

THE secret sins here spoken of are sins secret from myself. They may be quite visible to others. It is a very difficult thing to "see ourselves as others see us." One would think it would be otherwise. We often say of a man, "He knows best his own mind." But that is not true of any man. A man knows everything better than himself. I travel over the whole world before I reach my own home. I gaze on every fire before I stand by my own fireside. I look at the lights of Nature; they reveal much, but they do not reveal *me*. I survey the lights of history; they mirror my own soul, but I do not *recognise* myself. I study the lights of society; I see a picture of my own sins, but I say, "What bad people these are; I am glad I am not like

them!" We often breathe the prayer, "O send forth Thy light and Thy truth!" But I do not think we know the light we most need. We imagine that our greatest obscurity is the curtain hanging over our future. No; it is the curtain hanging over our present. It is not the throne of God's judgment that wants unveiling; it is the throne of our judgment—the sight of our own sin. No man can see his sin by looking at it; he can only see it by looking away from it. Only by the vision of purity can I learn my impurity. I never find that I am in rags until my Father brings forth the best robe. I never know that I am in discord until my Father's house reveals its music. I never realise that I am hungry until my Father says, "Let us eat and drink and be merry!" I never am conscious that I am a prodigal until the voice of my Father cries, "This my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found!"

Therefore, O Son of Man, I first need *Thee*. Only in Thy *rest* shall I learn what it is to be weary and heavy-laden. Do not let me think that I must feel my sin before I come to Thee! Do not let me wait till I can be conscious of my poverty! Let my first consciousness be of Thee! In the light of Thy countenance alone, shall I see my sin. How shall I learn

my rags except by Thy radiance! There is no storm heard upon my sea until Thy footsteps touch the wave. There are those who say I must feel myself to be fallen. Yes, but I cannot feel my fall until Thou hast lifted me. I saw a child trip one day and come to the ground. It never meant to cry; but somebody lifted it, and there followed a great shower of self-pity. So is it with my soul. It is when Thou raisest me that I feel my pain. It is when Thou warmest me that I feel my cold. It is when Thou greetest me that I feel my solitude. It is beside Thy waters that I thirst. It is in sight of Thy manna that I hunger. It is before Thy beauty that I tremble. It is in front of Thy smile that I weep. It is in view of Thy love that I loathe myself. It is Thy pardon that pierces me; it is Thy Cross that crucifies me; it is Thy redemption that rends me; it is Thy mercy that makes me remorseful. My penitence shall be the gift from Thy forgiveness; I shall learn my sins in the light of Thy countenance.

IV

WHAT MAKES LIFE WORTH LIVING

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."—MATT. xiii. 44.

WHY did the man buy that field? Every spectator of the transaction would have given a wrong reason. Some would have said, "He has bought it for its great extent of ground." Some would say, "He has purchased it for its abundance of trees and fruits.' Some would exclaim, "He wants a large pasturage for his cattle." Some would cry, "He evidently designs to build houses." And yet not one of these surmises would have been near the mark. The man bought the field for the sake of something which was quite invisible — something which was hid. I believe this is the universal practice. I think we all buy the world's field, not for the sake of that field, but for the sake of a little unseen thing which happens to lie

within it. That unseen thing is love; *that* is the treasure hid in the world's field! Have you considered how much the field is indebted to that hidden treasure? We speak of the striving for wealth, the thirst for fame, the lust for power, the bid for recognition. But you will find that those who seek these things seek them for the sake of love. Nobody would care for his field of labour if he did not associate it with some one hidden in his heart. Why is that friend of yours so eager in exchange and market-place? It is because he hears in fancy the prattle of his children's voices, and sees in imagination the warm household fire. Why is he beating for entrance at the doors of society? It is because it will gladden the life of her who wears his nuptial ring. Why is he seeking the plaudits of the multitude? It is in the hope that a certain one will hear them—only one—the one hid in his heart. Love, or the hope of love, is the wellspring of all labour; I buy the field for the sake of its invisible treasure.

And so, my Christ, I buy this world for the sake of Thee! I do not think this world is worth the price without Thee; it is too dear a purchase. It is the love of Thee that gives value to my field. I have heard men say, "A Christian cannot love the world"; but I say, "A Christian has alone the right to love the

world"; it is *worth* loving in Thee! I have become *eager* for the world through the love of Thee. I should like to be *rich* for Thee; I would have diamonds from the mine and pearls from the ocean—to give Thy hungry bread. I should like to be famous for Thee; I would be a leader of all fashions if I could lead Thy wanderers home. I should like to be gifted for Thee; I should covet being a great novelist if I could paint Thine image in a human soul. I should like to be joyous for Thee; it is when my heart is gladdest that I minister most to Thy sons of sorrow. *Thou* art my field of enterprise, O Christ! I would sing for Thy sad; I would work for Thy weary; I would husband for Thy homeless; I would overflow for Thine orphans; I would prosper for Thy poor; I would be crowned with glory and honour for the comforting of Thy brother's pain. Thou hast made it worth while for me to buy this field.

V

THE EMPIRE OF JESUS

"The men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!"—MATT. viii. 27.

THE marvellous thing about Christ's influence is the nature of the things which He influenced. The winds and the sea—these are the wayward forces, the types of variableness, the elements which cannot be counted on. If one can rule these he must have the root of empire in him. Our marvel at the sway of Jesus is the same marvel as that of the men on the Lake of Galilee—that "the winds and the sea" should obey Him. It is not the number of His followers that startles us. Buddha had more followers; Mohammed had more followers. It is the *quality* of the followers of Jesus that wakes our wonder. They are drawn from "the winds and the sea"—from the sphere of wayward forces. Both Buddha and Mohammed dwelt in a stagnant atmosphere.

They stood, not by the brink of the sea, but by the side of a dead pool. They heard no sound of waves, they listened to no murmur of the storm; theirs was a rod of empire over minds only half awake. But the mission of Jesus was a mission by the sea. His was a message delivered in front of the winds. He spoke to minds which were already on the wing—instinct with new life and separate life. Europe had come over into Asia, and the pulse of Asia had been quickened. Men had ceased to be uniform; they had begun to think independently. Opposite tastes had risen; opposing schools were rising. And yet this complex world agreed on *Jesus*. He took representatives from every school. He conquered men amid their varieties. He did not first ask them to give up their varieties. He took them into the ark as they were—of every kind. He did not ask them to be of one nature. He let them keep their separate tastes, their different likings. He allowed the winds to blow as before, the sea to wave as before. He required but one article of agreement—obedience to Himself. No wonder the men of Galilee marvelled!

O Lord Jesus Christ, Thine has been the empire of the *West*—an empire over the winds and the sea! Other masters have ruled the Eastern mind; they have wielded the sceptre

over sleeping souls and passionless hearts. But Thou hast reigned where passion reigns. Thy flag has waved amid the tempests of the spirit. Thou hast been most adored just where the pulses of life beat strongest. Thine is not the sway over a bruised and broken humanity. Thine is not the dominion over a valley and shadow of death. Thy kingdom has not only the power but the glory. Thy subjects are free souls, living hearts. Thou art king, not where Buddha is king—amid the tombstones, not where Mohammed is king—amid the grave-clothes, but where the streams flow, where the rivers run, where the torrents sweep, where the breezes dance and play. Thy people are *willing* in the day of Thy power; the winds and the sea obey Thee.

VI

THE GROUND OF SURVIVAL

"I will make the place of my feet glorious."—Isa. lx. 13.

THERE are some places which have only been made glorious by the feet that have trodden them. There are villages so obscure that in themselves they would never be heard of; but they have been the birthplace of genius, and in that light they glow. There are barren swamps that on their own account would never attract the eye; but they have been the scene of great battles, and they are thronged from all lands. Judea is indebted for her glory to the fact that *religion* once dwelt there. Nothing else has made her glorious. Measured by herself, she would be despised and rejected of men. When we see her, there is no natural beauty which we desire in her. She is below the Indian in philosophy, beneath the Egyptian in architecture, inferior to the Greek in culture,

eclipsed by the Roman in power, dwarfed by the Assyrian in magnificence. She has nothing on the secular side which she could live by, nothing by which her memory could have survived half an hour. How then has she been the most immortal of nations, the only nation that has outlived its environment? It is because she has been "the place of God's feet." She had no possession except for God. Her poetry was psalmody, her songs were hymns, her bards were prophets. When she built houses it was for God—either a tower for reaching heaven or a shrine for hallowing earth. When she made laws it was for God—laws for His honour, laws for His service. When she practised music it was for God—efforts to praise Him on an instrument of ten strings. When she crowned kings it was for God—the anointing of a priest to serve Him *outside* the sanctuary. This nation was emphatically what the poet declares the earth to be collectively—"bound with gold chains about the feet of God."

Therefore, my soul, has she survived. Dost thou marvel at her survival? Seems it to thee the survival of the unfittest? Learn then the parable, for it is meant for thee! If thou art fit for life eternal thou art fit for life temporal. The man fittest to keep alive on

earth is the man saturated with the thought of heaven. The "place of God's feet" is the place where the step has been elastic, springy. Where thou treadest lightly time treads lightly too. If God be in thy heart, thy heart will keep young. If thy heart be young, thou shalt never be unfit to live. All the disadvantages of Judea may be thine. Thine may be outward weakness, social isolation, intellectual limits, ignorance of the world, bad fortune, the storm and stress of wandering in desert places. But if through these places thy step is the step of God, if through these places thou walkest by the *will* of God, if through these places thou leapest by the *love* of God, the light heart will keep thee young. Be it ever so rough, be it ever so steep, be it ever so miry, the place of His feet is glorious. Take God on thy route, and thou shalt banish wrinkles from thy brow. Gethsemane itself shall not age thee if thou tread by the side of Jesus; for it is not the place of thy travel that makes thee weary—it is the heaviness of thy step.

VII

THE BEGINNINGS OF SALVATION

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings!"—Isa. lii. 7.

CHRIST in the soul descends from the mountain to the valley. Divine knowledge follows the opposite course to human knowledge. Human knowledge rises from earth to heaven; the boy learns geography before he studies astronomy. But Divine knowledge descends from heaven to earth. Its first influence is exerted on the high places—the places nearest the sky. The feet of Christ are first seen on the mountains. The beginning of the Divine life is high aspiration. We often look in a wrong direction for the evidence of its footprints. We see a man on some occasion transgress the law of temperance; we say, "It is clear he is getting no good from religious services." It is not clear at all. The feet of the Divine life

begin on the mountains, and they may take some time to reach the plains. You have seen the tops of the hills aflame with morning gold while the plain and the valley were in shadow. Even so is it with the life of the soul. If you want to know a man's spiritual prospects, it is to the *hills* you must lift up your eyes. You must judge his morning hours not by what he does but by what he thinks. You must measure him by his aspirations. You must seek the feet of the coming Lord, not in the man's deeds, but in his *desires* to do. That is why at the beginning we are said to be justified, not by works, but by faith. It is a great kindness in our Father to make the test of us, not what we do, but what we dream of. In the absence of our good actions our Father will impute to us our good dreams. He will accept Christ's footprints while as yet they are only on the mountains.

And that is my comfort, O my Father. My deeds are far behind. Neither on the plain nor in the valley do I yet reveal Thy footprints. But the mountains are already in a glow. I have *dreams* of Thy Christ, aspirings after His beauty, longings for His love. Though not yet do I follow Him, He stands upon my highest hill. He is the climax of my hopes, the acme of my wishes, the height of my

ambitions, the ideal of what I should *like* to be. On the mountain of my heart His feet are already beautiful. Keep Thine eye upon the mountain, O my Father! Behold my dreams of Him, my dreams of Thee! Look not yet on my plain! Gaze not yet on my valley! Expect not yet the footprints of Thy Christ on the beaten path! My walk is still imperfect, but I have learned to soar. Judge me by my soaring! Receive me by the rising of my wing! Accept my *cry* for Thy Christ! Open Thy gates to my *dreams* of Thee! Unbar Thy heavens to the mere sigh of my spirit! Meet me on the mountain—on the places paved as yet only with my good intentions! Come to me with the ring and the robe and the welcome while for Thee I have only the resolve, "I will arise and go to my Father"! Behold in that desire the feet of Thy Christ upon the hill!

VIII

WORSHIP UNDER THE SHADOW

"When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him."—MARK xvi. 1.

I HAVE always felt that these women who stood at the sepulchre on Easter morning had reached the very climax of Christian love. Most people will mistake the reason why I think so. The common impression will be that the wonderful thing about them was their faith that Christ would rise again. To me the wonderful thing is the fact that their love survived the *eclipse* of that faith. It is clear to my mind that they did not expect Christ to rise again. They had not been amongst the circle of disciples to whom He had promised His rising. But what proves conclusively that they had no hope of His resurrection is the fact that they brought the spices. Would any one bring spices to anoint a body which he knew would

rise again! Let us not mistake the significance of the act of these women. It was a deed of the deepest devotion; but why? Because it was a deed of devotion paid to a Christ whom they believed to be dead. They wanted the stone rolled from the sepulchre; but why? Not because they hoped to see Jesus come forth, but because they wished to anoint His body in the grave. They dreamed not of a Resurrection Angel; they dreamed not of a vacant sepulchre; they dreamed not of a risen Christ —they brought, not garlands, but spices. Yet to them even the *dead* Christ was supreme! The dead Christ was more than all the living world! They thought Jesus to be in the grave; but their heart was in the grave with Jesus. They deemed that death held Him; but it held for them all that was dear. Their hopes of a coming kingdom were levelled with the dust; but the dust itself had become the treasury of that which to them was the fairest, the holiest, the most precious, memory that ever gladdened or saddened a human soul!

My brother, there are hours in your life in which faith is *eclipsed.* There come moments to you in which Christ is buried in the grave and you see not beyond the sepulchre. Men say at such times that you have parted with Christ. It need not be so. You have lost the garlands.

but you ought to have the spices still. Men call you an agnostic, you call yourself an agnostic; but if you have ceased to know, why should you cease to feel? To you, as to the first disciples, there has dawned the intermediate day between Calvary and Olivet; Christ is dead, and the Angel of the Resurrection is not yet come. It is a dark day—the darkest I know in the sky of a human soul. What then!—will you cease to call yourself a Christian! Did the two Marys cease to call themselves Christians! They, too, were in that intermediate day; they, too, were wandering between Calvary and Olivet. The world would have said of them, "They have made shipwreck; they have lost everything!" Had they? No, they had one thing left—the spices; they could at least anoint the dead. You, too, my benighted brother, can retain this star; you can anoint the dead. Bring your spices to the sepulchre of Jesus! Is He not worthy of being anointed even for His burial! Your *faith* may have wavered; but will you let *love* die! Prophets may have failed, tongues may have ceased, knowledge may have vanished away; but will you let *love* die? The roses are withered, but the spices are still there. The box is broken, but the fragrance is still there. You believe your Christ to be a memory. Glorify that

memory! Crown Him in death! Wreath Him in the sepulchre! Worship Him in His night! Adore Him in His tattered robes! Recognise Him in His mean disguise! Bow to Him in His valley of humiliation! So shall your love be fragrant when your faith is broken; bring your spices to the grave of Jesus!

IX

THE GROUND FOR SPIRITUAL ANXIETY

"Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light?" —Amos v. 20.

THE prophet is speaking to men who have a good religious creed but are living a bad life. They are committing every vice under the sun and praying for the day of the Lord. Amos says they are praying against themselves—asking something which, to them, would be darkness and not light. He does not mean that when the day of the Lord comes the wicked will be prevented from seeing it. His words imply the contrary. He says distinctly that if the day of the Lord came to-morrow it would embrace under its dome the bad as well as the good. But he says that to the bad and to the good it would have a different appearance. Both would look on the same thing, but they would have a contrary perception; what was light to the good would be darkness to the bad. We

all feel this to be true. To a selfish man there would be no place in the universe so miserable as heaven. What makes heaven day to Jesus would make it night to Judas—the reign of love. I have been often struck with the question Hosea puts to selfish people, "What shall ye do in the day of the feast of the Lord?" He does not say they will get no place at the table; he asks what interest they will have in the proceedings when they sit down. How will they appreciate a banquet where every sentiment proposed will be commemorative of sacrifice, and every plaudit raised will be a tribute to the Lamb that was slain! It is not enough to be free from so-called adverse circumstances. The deepest adversity is solitude of soul—the want of harmony with one's environment. It is not enough that I am untouched by the lightning; I must be touched by the sunbeam. I would rather be struck by lightning than struck by nothing, for the soul is dead that slumbers, and the chords that never vibrate are the saddest chords of all.

My Father, prepare me for the place of Thy rest! I often speak as if the question were whether Thou wilt let me *in*. O no, that is not, that never was, the question! Thou hast never separated the good and the bad by locality. I doubt not that the wise and foolish virgins entered by the same *outward* gate; the door that

was shut upon the foolish was an inward door. Hast Thou not told me that the man without the wedding garment got in with the white-robed multitude! It was after his *entrance* that he felt his want. I have no fear that I shall ever be driven from Thy presence; but I wish to enjoy that presence, to bask in it, to sing in it. I fear to stand by the crystal river and have no eye for its clearness. I dread to walk in the green pastures and have no sense of their richness. I am afraid to be at the concert of multitudinous voices and have no ear for their sweetness. I tremble to be enrolled in the league of pity and have no heart for its kindness. I dread not the thunder nor the earthquake nor the fire; I dread the circumstances of the blessed without their spirit of blessedness—the harp without the heart, the wing without the wish, the song without the soul, the labour without the love. Save me, O Father, from an uncongenial heaven!

X

THE SILENCE OF GOD

"Occupy till I come."—Luke xix. 13.

THIS is a very difficult thing to do. It is easy to be occupied with the things of time when we have a sense of their durableness, when we can say, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many days." But to be occupied with the things of time when you have a sense of their perishableness, to be occupied with them when you hear a voice, "This night shall thy soul be required of thee"—that is an arduous task. I heard lately of a man who prophesied that the end of the world would come in twelve years, and who, at the very moment when he uttered the prediction, took the lease of his house for a hundred. How shall we explain this attitude towards both worlds? We can only explain it by the supposition that he felt the bird in the hand more sure than the bird in the bush. And, however startling it may sound, that is the

meaning of this passage. Look at the context. The disciples think the kingdom is coming at once. Jesus tells them the parable of a nobleman who said to his servants, "Occupy till I come," and then departed into a far country. Why into "a *far* country"? Simply to create uncertainty. If the nobleman had merely gone a short distance, the sense of his near presence would have expelled every other presence. What Christ says in effect is this: "You want to see the kingdom near. If I granted your wish, you would have no 'occupation' here; time would be dwarfed by the vision of eternity. If you are to occupy till I come, it is essential that My coming should be but dimly seen. You would have no spirit to make a business contract if you thought it would be annulled by the Second Advent. Therefore I will make the Second Advent not very visible to you. I will keep it in the mist, I will wrap it in the shadows; for the wheels of life must go on, and the time which elapses till My coming must be occupied in work for man."

Say not then, my soul, "Where is the promise of His coming?" If the wheels of life are to go on, the wheels of His chariot must come silently. Has He not bidden us break the bread till He come! There would be little incentive for thee to break the bread if the wheels of the chariot

were audible. What need to gather stores for the hungry if the manna from heaven were seen falling! It is not the will of thy Father that in beholding human poverty thou shouldst say, "The *Lord* will provide." It is *thou* that are to provide; it is *thy* hand that is to break bread for thy brother! Therefore thy Lord *hides* His coming. He covers the sheen with His cloud that thou mayst not see it; He drives His chariot over soft places that thou mayst not hear it. O blessed blindness, O divine deafness! It is by these, my soul, thy life on earth is maintained; it is by these thy human bread is broken. Thank thy Father for the silence; thank thy Christ for the distance of the far-off land! It is the reticence of heaven that helps thee to occupy the earth.

XI

DIVES IN THE UNDER-WORLD

"Son, remember."—LUKE xvi. 25.

THE words are put into the mouth of Abraham; but Abraham is here the representative of God; God is the real speaker. They are supposed to be spoken to a human soul in the scene of punishment. In this connection, many have been struck with the word "remember"; it suggests the continuity of memory in a future life. But to me the powerful expression is the more neglected one —the little word "son." That a man in a state of retribution should experience the burden of *memory* is not wonderful; retribution *demands* memory. But that a man in the scene of retribution should still be addressed as a son of God—that is a startling thing. It is as beautiful as it is startling; it is as true as it is beautiful. Wherever you and I may pass at death, we shall never pass out of the

Divine fatherhood nor out of the Divine pity. The man in this parable who is meeting retribution is not punished by his Father; he is punished by his sin. If a child, in disobedience to an earthly father, goes near a fire and gets burned, you would not say he was punished by his father. It would be more correct to say that his father shared in his penalty. The sense of human parentage is never so strong as when the father realises the child's pain; it immediately becomes his own pain. So is it with the Divine Father. The filial relation is not broken when I burn myself; no flame can consume that cord. Paul asks, "Who can divide us from the love of God!" I do not think a place of retribution can. Very finely does this narrative suggest that, however wide the gulf between Dives and Abraham, there is a chain across it. Sympathy can bridge it; there is a telepathic communication from soul to soul. Dives holds fast by the Divine Fatherhood; the Divine Fatherhood claims Dives as still a son.

My Father who art in heaven, by this name shall I ever know Thee. Whither shall I flee from the presence of Thy fatherhood! If I ascend up into heaven, it is there; if I fly to the limits of the earth, it is there; and even if I make my bed in hell, it is there also!

My darkness cannot cover me from Thy fatherhood; my sin cannot make me less Thy son. Go where my spirit may, it will never get beyond Thy pity. It may get into the prison-house; but *Thou* wilt not be its gaoler. Is it not written that the spirits in prison received a message from Thy crucified heart. Blessed message—for them, for me! It tells every Dives in every hour of penalty that Thou canst span the gulf which Abraham cannot span—that fire cannot melt the golden chain of Thy compassion, nor distance break the bond that bids Thee call him son.

XII

THE NEEDS OF THE SECULAR

"Come over into Macedonia, and help us."—Acts xvi. 9.

IT is the cry of Greece to Judea—the appeal of the secular to the sacred. Greece had every secular possession the heart can name—beauty, philosophy, art, culture, gaiety. Judea had at this moment no secular possession at all; she had only Christ. Yet rich Greece called for the help of poor Judea! It is no passing picture, no evanescent experience; it is an eternal truth. The secular world cannot *live* without the help of Christ. I do not mean the familiar truism that the things of earth are perishable. I mean that the perishable things of earth themselves require the aid of something beyond them; time cries to eternity, "Come over, and help us!" No man can fulfil the duties of the hour by the light of the hour; it is always by a coming light. The schoolboy works for his prize, the clerk for his

promotion. Nothing of value is stimulated by the mere sense of the moment. Not even charity is so stimulated. My benevolence for anything is proportionate to my idea of its longevity. Rome had no hospitals for incurables, no infirmaries for lives useless to the state. Why have *we* such institutions? It is because we think of these people as possible members of a future state. Our charity has been born of our faith and our hope. Why do we not follow the Roman in eliminating deformed infants? Because we have more pity? Nay, I think the Roman was *prompted* by pity. We refuse to follow, not because we feel more deeply, but because we see more clearly. We have caught sight of another chance for the deformed infant—a chance which his misfortune will not impair. We have seen that he too is worth training, worth educating, worth moulding—that there is a place waiting for him in a republic even larger than that of Rome.

Come over, and help us, O Christ! Come over, and help that life which we call secular! Come over, and help our charities; teach us the eternal value of our brother's body and soul! Come over, and help our pleasures; give us that self-forgetfulness which imparts zest to every joy! Come over, and help our business;

Thy peace can preserve from panic in counting-house and exchange! Come over, and help our manners; Thy grace can make us gracious, the brightness of Thy face can brighten ours! Come over, and help our sense of the beautiful; let us read Thy soul in all things, and all things will be twice lovely! Come over, and help our forgiveness; let pity for the injurer take the place of wounded pride! Come over, and help our toiling; double work will follow when we shall rest in the spirit! No school trains for earth like Thy school of heaven; come over, and help us, O Lord!

XIII

THE GIFT OF SANGUINENESS

"That ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."—Rom. xv. 13.

TO "abound in hope" means, as I take it, to "have the sanguine temperament." It expresses, not so much the idea of intensity, as the thought of pervasiveness—an *atmosphere* of hope. The startling thing is to hear a sanguine temperament spoken of as a gift of the Spirit. We are apt to look upon it with rather a patronising eye. We think of it as the attribute of a child, of a boy, of a *little* nature. We can see how *faith* should be a gift of the Spirit; we can see how love should be a gift of the Spirit; but hope seems too lowly a flower for such a planting. And yet I think it requires a greater exercise of Divine power to inspire with habitual hope than to inspire either with habitual faith or with habitual love. Faith and love both get a

training in this world. The child is taught to trust his parents; the man is bound to his brother by the ties of friendship. But hope gets no training in this world. There are no materials for its training. Its gleams are too few and fleeting to influence the eye; its effects are too transient to mould the heart. If there *is* to be a training for hope, it must come from another world—from God's world. There must be gleams from beyond the earth, songs from beyond the air. There must be sights which eye hath not seen, sounds which ear hath not heard, thoughts which heart hath not conceived. We have all some object whom we can *trust* for ever; we have all some object whom we can love for ever; but we have no earthly object whom we can see for ever in the sunshine. The source of perpetual hope is God alone.

Spirit Divine, I ask from Thee that most precious of gifts—a sanguine mind. It is not so much any special hope that I ask, as hope abounding—hope pervasive. I ask, not so much the spring of the year, as the elastic spring of the heart. The spring of the year must fade, but the spring of the heart can abide for ever. May it abide with *me*, this elastic spring! Not alone in my soaring, not alone in my singing, may I feel its power! May it abide with me

when the glass is low—when there is no ground for its existence in anything outside! When fast falls the eventide, when the darkness deepens, when other helpers fail and comforts flee, may it abide with me! There is no triumph of hope like its triumph in the dark; give me that triumph, O Lord! There are times when men can only account for my hope by saying, "He has a sanguine temperament"; they mean that it lies in the spirit alone. I bless Thee for such times! They prove that joy is my native element; they tell me that I was born to sing. Ever keep that singing in my soul! However old the flesh, let my heart be young! However weak the hand, let my heart be strong! However bent the form, let my heart be light! However cold the day, let my heart be warm! However dim the sky, let my heart be morning! Then shall I know how Divine a gift is that hope which enters by no outward door.

XIV

THE PREMONITIONS OF DIVINE GRACE

"Jesus sent messengers before His face."—Luke ix. 52.

EVERYTHING in the world has premonitory symptoms—messengers whom it sends beforehand to tell of its coming. All things predict themselves before they appear. There are days in the spring which prefigure the summer; there are days in the child which prefigure the man. Grace, too, has its prognostics—its anticipative swallows. There are birds whose flight predicts a storm; but there are also birds whose flight predicts a calm. When Christ is coming to the soul there is always a preliminary movement of wings—the wings of the spirit. Does not He tell us Himself that the sign of His coming will be swift movement—unrest, "As the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, even so shall the coming of the Son of Man be." And is it not true to man's

experience? Is not unrest ever the premonitory symptom of the spiritual dawn? It is so even with intellectual dawn; I revolt from the old long before I have a sight of the new. But in the sphere of grace it is specially so. There are hundreds of people still outside the higher life who have yet become weary of the lower. They have not seen over the wall, but they have struck against the wall. They have found the world too small for them—not a bad place but an inadequate place. They want, not less of it, but more—more fellowship, more companionship, more brotherhood, more social intercourse. They are weary of conventionalism, weary of stilted proprieties, weary of counting their own steps. The ball-room offends them, not because it is a ball-room, but because it is a masked room—a place where words are not meant to reveal. The dance offends them, not by its joys, but by its jealousies. They want to reap more pleasure from the world, more gain from gaiety, more freedom from friendship. Their cry is, "Set my feet in a larger room!"

And such cries, O Christ, are Thy messengers to me. They are John Baptist in the wilderness; they tell me *Thou* art near. They tell me, not that the world is passing away, but that its circumscribedness is passing away. They

call me, not to a life of asceticism, but to a life of less asceticism. Through the still air I hear them depreciating the size of my world, tempting me to larger rooms. It is not my love for the *creature* they condemn; it is the want of it. They ask from me *more* love for the creature—more service of man. And they ask it because Thou art coming and because the service of man is Thy service. They ask it because Thy love for the creature is boundless. They bid me come out into the world—the big world—Thy world. They bid me leave the villages, the hamlets, the rustic places, and emerge into Thy city of human souls. They bid me quit the masked ball for the unmasked assembly—the general assembly of the first-born and the spirits of the just made perfect and the spirits of the unjust that are still to be purified. My first prophecy of Thy coming is my cry for a larger earth.

XV

THE BOLDNESS OF PETER AND JOHN

"When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."—Acts iv. 13.

THESE two men drew one quality from the same source; they had both become bold from living with Jesus. Yet it was not the same kind of boldness. Peter and John were both courageous; yet the courage of Peter was as unlike the courage of John as the sun is unlike the moon. When Christ gives the same quality to two men He does not thereby make them the same man. The light which shines on the wall comes from the same source as the light which shines on the river; but no one would mistake the light on the river for the light on the wall. Even so, no one would mistake the courage of Peter for the courage of John. They are not only different; they are in some sense opposite.

Peter has the courage that strikes; John has the courage that waits. Peter is a force of action; John is a force of bearing. Peter draws the sword; John lies on the bosom. Peter crosses the sea to meet Jesus; John tarries till the Lord comes. Peter goes into the sepulchre where the body of Jesus has lain; John merely *looks* in—keeps the image of sorrow in his heart. Christ needs each of these types. There are times when His kingdom requires the courage of the hand—the power of actual contact with danger. There are times when it needs the courage of the heart—the power to wait when nothing can be done, and to keep the spirit up when the hand must be let down. Life has both its Galilee and its Patmos—its place for work and its place for waiting; and for both it requires courage.

And yet methinks, my soul, thou needst it most for Patmos. John's courage is the least shining, yet is it not the most difficult! There are men who could be bold in Galilee who could not be bold in Patmos. It is a hard thing to keep the vision of hope before thee when thou art in island life. It is comparatively easy to have courage in the battle; the sight of the multitude inspires boldness. But to have courage in the moment of isolation,

to have courage when there is no spectator, to have courage when thou art alone with thine own thoughts and hearest not the chorus of human sympathy—this is an arduous thing! And this is the thing that is most asked of thee. Thy most tragic moments are thy Patmos moments. Thy deepest struggles are ever in the wilderness. The duty most required of thee is to bear. Not to say to this mountain, "Be thou removed!" is thy greatest need. The power wanted of thee is to keep this mountain on thy breast without fainting. The courage of faith can cast it into the sea; but only the courage of love can bear its pressure. They are brave soldiers that meet Christ in Galilee; but methinks the honours of the day are reserved for the men of Patmos. Meet Him in Patmos, O my soul!

XVI

MY KNOWLEDGE OF GOD A RECOGNITION

"Return unto thy rest, O my soul!"—Psa. cxvi. 7.

"RETURN unto thy rest." Why "return"? Why not say "*enter* into thy rest"? It is because the Psalmist feels that the atmosphere of goodness is the soul's native air. We breathe it like a *former* atmosphere; we feel at home in it. When we do wrong we have not the sense of being at home. Even the worst man is not quite comfortable in the air of evil; he does not breathe freely. But when a bad man is surprised into doing something good he does breathe freely. His sensation may be unusual; but it is recognised by him as his normal state, the state which suits him. However unusual your sense of comfort may be, the fact that it is comfort proves it to be normal. I could not rest in anything which was quite new to me. What is rest

but congruity? That in which my soul reposes must be a previous possession of my soul. It matters not how far I have wandered from it, it matters not how long it be since I have seen it; if my sight of it brings repose it must somewhere, somehow have been in contact with me. All rest must be a return. Nothing is rest at the beginning; all first meetings are painful to the soul. A meeting which brings rest proves that between me and the other there has been a previous acquaintance. If the voice fails to ruffle me, it is because it is the voice of long ago.

Thou Christ of Calvary, my meeting with Thee has been a recognition of Thee. In that meeting I have found rest unto my soul. I could not have found rest to my soul if I had not met Thee before; flesh and blood could *never* have revealed it. The song of Bethlehem came to me as no new song. I seemed to remember hearing its cadences in the long long ago. Not as a stranger did I go forth to greet Thee. Something in my heart responded to the ocean of Thy love. A drop of its spray must have fallen there in the days of yore. The voice of my heart became the murmur of the shell sighing for its parent sea. And when the sea rolled in, when the ocean of Thy love broke upon my shore, deep called unto deep.

I recognised the old home; I distinguished the old song. The murmur of my heart went out to meet the murmur of the great sea. The imprisoned drop of spray leapt up to greet the spray of the living waters, the fountains of Thy life. I knew Thee; I remembered Thee; I recognised Thee. I knew Thee better than I knew the husks of the far country which had been *my* country. I had lived among *them* for years, and I had seen *Thee* but for a moment; yet *they* were foreign to me; *Thou* wert home, sweet home. In coming to Thee I do not feel that I have risen; rather do I seem to have resumed my native air. The lark and the eagle soar beyond their nest; but my heart soars to *find* its nest, and the burden of its song is ever this, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul!"

XVII

GOD'S STANDARD OF PROSPERITY

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me."—Psa. xxiii. 6.

THERE is a mercy which goes before us, and there is a mercy which follows us. The one is the clearing of our own path; the other is the clearing of a path for our brother man. There is an expression, "May your path be strewn with flowers!" That may mean one or other of two things. It may be the wish that you may be called to tread a flowery way, or it may be the wish that when you tread the thorny way you may leave flowers where you have passed. The latter is the Psalmist's aspiration, and it is the nobler aspiration. It is an aspiration which can only come from a "restored soul." *Any* man can desire to be cradled in green pastures and led by quiet waters. But to desire that my life may *make* the pastures green, to desire that my life may *make* the waters quiet—that is a Divine prayer,

a Christlike prayer. There is a prosperity for which every good man is bound to pray. It is finely expressed, I think, in a line of Tennyson's "Maud"—

> "Her feet have touched the meadows, and have left the daisies rosy."

The daisies were not rosy in advance; they became rosy by the feet touching them. It was the footsteps themselves that exerted a transforming power; they created a flowery path for *future* travellers; goodness and mercy *followed* them.

Lord, make my wish thus golden; help me to say, "Let goodness and mercy *follow* me!" I have been looking to the roses that lie before me—to the flowers that others have spread for me. But am I to leave no roses behind me, O my Father! Am I to leave no footprints on the sands of time which may cheer the heart of some shipwrecked brother! Methinks the blessed life is the life that bequeaths blessing. There are men whose angel goes before them to prepare their way; and truly their comfort should be deep! But I think the richest consolation is reserved for those whose angel shall follow them—whose feet shall prepare the way for *coming* generations. Many a life is pronounced by man unfortunate which by

Thee is pronounced prosperous. We look at the bleeding hands which plucked the thorns; we say, "It is the record of a sad life." But *Thine* eye rests upon the thorns that are plucked, on the pain which the bleeding hands have made impossible to others; and Thy verdict is, "A life of great prosperity." *I* should like to get that verdict, my Father! I should like Thy recording angel to tell how he journeyed behind me and made my deeds glorious. I should like the future traveller to say, "This path is thornless because that man passed through the briars." I should like a monument to be raised, not to the thorns I have escaped, but to the thorns I have cleared away. I should desire on my tombstone this, beyond all other epitaphs—"Goodness and mercy have *followed* me."

XVIII

WHERE SHALL I MOST MISS GOD?

"If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence."—Exod. xxxiii. 15.

THIS is to my mind one of the most remarkable prayers in the Bible. It is not a prayer to get to the land of Canaan. It is rather a prayer *against* getting there except under particular conditions. The people in the desert had been guilty of idolatry. God was incensed with them. He threatened to withdraw His presence from them. He would cease to be their personal guide; He would send an angel in His room. He would not, indeed, break His promise of bringing them to the land of Canaan; He would ensure their entrance there. But He would not Himself lead them; He would put them in the hands of an emissary. Moses says, "If we are to lose Thy presence, let us stay where we are. I would rather lose Thy presence in the *desert*

than lose it in the land of Canaan. It is not enough for me that a safe passage has been secured for me to the land of Beulah. I should not wish to go into the land of Beulah if Thou wert not there. Bad as Thine absence from the desert would be, it would be nothing to Thine absence from Canaan. If such a tragic separation should come, let it be here—not yonder; if Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence."

And so it is with *me*, O Lord. I hear men say that they need Thy presence for the dust and the din and the battle; so, doubtless, they do. Yet I think, so far as love is concerned, I should feel Thine absence most under the calm and sunny sky. I think, if Thy presence went from me at all, I would rather it should quit me in the desert than quit me in the land of Canaan; I would say with Moses, "If Thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence." The prayer of every soul must be, "Through storm and sunshine, Lord, abide with me ; yet, methinks, if Thou wert away I should miss Thee in the sunshine more than in the storm. The storm would not naturally remind me of Thee; but the sunshine would. I have never associated Thy presence with the keen blast; but I have associated it with the summer air. Thou hast been to me the final bloom

on every flower, the crowning tint on every sky. It is *there* that I should miss Thee. I should miss Thee most in the spot where I used most to see Thee. I never thought of the storm as Thy native garment; it always seemed one of Thy temporary robes. But the calm has to my heart been Thy normal vesture—chiefly beautiful because it has clothed *Thee.* I should no more like to meet the calm without Thee than I should like to see the old garment of my friend after his spirit had fled. If I *must* part from Thee, let it be now—not in Canaan! "If Thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence."

XIX

THE VOICE BEFORE THE DESERT

"And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water. And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—MATT. iii. 16. 17.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness."—MATT. iv. 1.

JESUS is called the Man of Sorrows, and such He was; yet it was not by His sorrows that He redeemed the world; it was by His flashes of joy. Before He took any cross He had always a gleam of sunshine. That which enabled Him to bear the cross was not His resignation; it was His gladness. I have been greatly struck with the present illustration of the principle. He was about to go into a wilderness—a place of solitude. What was to be His safeguard there? The spirit of submission? The resignation to calamity? The sense of life's inherent misery? The resolve not to be eclipsed by the Stoic? Not one of these. His safeguard in the

coming solitude was to be a voice—the remembrance of a companionship. It was *that* which was to enable Him to bear the loneliness. And it is ever so in the leading of our Father. When you and I get into the desert and refuse to cry, what keeps us from tears is not simple fortitude; it is the possession of an unconquered joy. No man would be able to endure the desert of to-day if it were not for the voices of yesterday. I believe that any one grief would be sufficient to kill a man if it were the only thing in the world. Did you ever ask yourself why so many people under the shadow do not die. It is because the shadow covers only part of the man. There is always a little bit of the body in the light. What keeps me from succumbing to any sorrow is the sunshine on the other side of the street. If it were not for that the habitual form of death would be a broken heart.

I thank Thee, O Lord, that I am not sent into the wilderness till I have gathered joy. I thank Thee that I bring streams with me into the desert. I often say that I have found streams in the desert. Yet, in truth, my Father, it is I who have brought them there. I was so intent on other things that I was unconscious of their existence. But when the shadow hid the other things I began to hear a murmur, and

looking round, I beheld the streams. They came not from my desert; they came from something unconquered by my desert. They were the waters I tasted before starting—tasted almost mechanically, without observation. But I thank Thee for them *now*. It is not in the baptismal moment that I know the good of the waters; it is in the hour of the desert. The streams are underground till the desert comes. It is written, "There is *laid up* for me a crown of glory." Methinks *all* our crowns are "laid up for us"—kept hid till the desert hour. I am quite unconscious to-day how much Thy streams are refreshing me; but I shall know to-morrow. I shall find to-day's water-brooks in to-morrow's wilderness. I shall meet Cana at Calvary, Bethlehem at Bethany, Jordan at Jerusalem. I shall find Thy gems in the broken casket, Thine ointment in the shattered box, Thy songs in the midnight air. Only in the silence of the desert hour shall I recognise the Voice that has been singing since the morning.

XX

THE CONVERSION OF THE SEA

"The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee."—Isa. lx. 5.

GOD'S ancient people had a peculiar physical aversion; they hated the sea. The land of Israel might be said to be a martyr to sea-sickness. The sea was its symbol for all calamity; the absence of sea was its synonym for all rest. When a Jewish writer wanted to describe the calm of heaven he could find no better simile than this, "There shall be no more sea." To be the inhabitant of an island was a fearful thing; it was made the metaphor of desolation—"The isles *wait* for Thee." When God is angry with the old world He sends, not a fire, but a flood; it is the climax of calamities. But the prophet says that when Messiah comes men will change their minds—the sea shall be "converted" to them. They will come to admire what they hated. The old aversion will

become a beauty. The symbol of terror will be transformed into a symbol of glory. The waves shall waft joy to them; the foam shall freshen them; the breezes shall brace them; the storms shall strengthen them; the expanses shall exhilarate them; the roar shall become rhythmic to them. The element which once suggested an empty waste shall in the golden days be made an emblem of fulness. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!"

Even such, O Son of Man, has been Thy transforming hand; the sea at Thy coming has been converted unto me! I used to shrink from my afflicted brother as from a pestilence; I could not love the broken. I stood in all the capitals of the ancient world and helped to drive the stricken to the wall. I stood in the streets of Jerusalem and bade the leper seek the desert; I could not associate sickness with sanctity. I stood in the streets of Rome and bade the invalid seek the highway; I could not link weakness with military glory. I stood in the streets of Athens and bade the deformed vanish from my sight; I could not brook a marred visage amid the blaze of physical beauty. But I have seen another city—Thy city, and I have found there all the banished forms. The leper whom I sent into the desert

is there; the invalid whom I drove into the highway is there; the deformed from whom I closed my eyes is there. Not as objects of charity are they there; not as targets for pity are they there; not as victims for ostentatious benevolence are they there. They are there as competitors in the race of glory. Thou hast made a wreath for the *laden*, O Lord! All *our* wreaths were for the labouring—for the men of active toil. But Thou hast garlanded the waiting, the patient, the unrepining. Thou hast a crown for the uncrushed soul in the crushed body. Thou hast a wreath for the unwithered heart with the withered hand. Thou hast a laurel for the undimmed love with the dimmed lustre. Thou hast a chaplet for the unextinguished cheer amid the outward chill. Thou hast a palm for peace in conflict; Thou hast a garland for grace in sorrow; Thou hast a rose for rest in pain; Thou hast a smile for sweetness in adversity; Thou hast a mansion for music in the night. O Son of Man, Thou hast beautified the sea!

XXI

THE PROVINCE OF MENTAL REST

"It shall come to pass in the day that the Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, that thou shalt say, How hath the oppressor ceased!"—Isa. xiv. 3, 4.

NO man discerns his sunbeams till he has found rest. When the mind is in a state of turmoil we are ignorant of our own privileges. We are like Abraham on Mount Moriah. We are perplexed about our Isaac, and therefore we miss the ram which is caught in the thicket. The ram is there all the time, yet we see it not. We are too distressed in mind to see it. Before it can break on our sight we must get rest from our sorrow—our sorrow about Isaac. The moment Abraham gets rest regarding Isaac, he has a clear vision of the ram; he cries, "How has the oppression ceased!" The oppression had ceased long ago. The way of escape had been wide open before his eyes. There had never been any outward mist over

the gate; the gate was there, and it was there unbarred. Why had he not seen it? Because it was hid by another mist—the mist of the heart. There are more things hid by the mist before the heart than by the mist before the eye. Mary comes to the door of the sepulchre and cries, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him," and all the time He is at her side. The disciples upon the road to Emmaus lament an absent Christ, and all the time He is walking with them, talking with them. Why have these failed to recognise their privileges? Because they are in mental unrest; Mary has a sad heart, the disciples have a wounded spirit. It is no use to anoint the eyes when the soul is weeping; the eyes will not see, if there are tears in the soul. In vain, if the heart is troubled, will you unveil the many mansions in the house of my Father. Only when my spirit has *rest* can I say, "How has the oppression ceased!"

Lord, I have been mistaken as to the time for Thy rest. I have thought of it as something which comes at the evening hour—at the end of my day. I have thought of it as a state of final peace, resulting from the clearness of my view. Not so, my Father! Thy rest comes not from my vision; it is my vision comes from Thy rest. Not because I have seen the rainbow do I repose

in Thee; I repose in Thee that I may see the rainbow. I must rest from my labour first, and then my works shall follow—my powers of beholding Thy glory. Thy rest is for the morning, not the evening. It is sent to give me wings, not to *fold* my wings. It is not the close, but the beginning, of my day. I shall never begin to see Thee till my seventh morning dawns. Only when Thy Sabbath rest is at the door shall I see Thy creation to be "very good." It has been "very good" all along; chaos has been vanishing, dry land has been appearing, stormy waters have been subsiding. But I cannot see this without my Sabbath, Thy Sabbath. In vain the light shall gleam, in vain the firmament shall sparkle, in vain the herb and plant and tree shall spring, without Thy Sabbath. Rest alone can recognise radiance; peace alone can perceive progress; calmness alone can cry, "Chaos is dispelled!" I wait for Thy seventh morning, O Lord; I wait for Thy Sabbath of rest. Only when I am "still" shall I "know that Thou art God"; when Thou hast given my spirit rest I shall say, "How hath the oppressor ceased!"

XXII

THE LIBERATION FROM LEGISLATION

"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances, and nailing it to His cross."—Col. ii. 14.

"No man ever hated his own flesh."—Eph. v. 29.

THERE are some mothers who have had a handwriting of rules hung upon the wall of the nursery, which were designed to regulate the conduct of the children. Among these rules you would find a vast variety of precepts. But I feel quite sure that there would be one conspicuous by its absence. You would find no precept forbidding a boy to strike *himself*. Why would such a precept be absent? Because it would be useless. No man ever hated his own flesh, and so there is no need to put up a rule prohibiting self-hurt. Now, this is Paul's idea of the abolished handwriting. It is abolished because it has become useless. As long as each man believed his neighbour to be a different being, it was essential that there

should be rules as to his conduct towards him. But when a man comes to Christ he feels that his neighbour is a part of himself—he loves his neighbour *as* himself. Any gain to his neighbour would be a gain to *him;* any hurt to his neighbour would be a hurt to him. Accordingly, there is no need to hang up rules—"Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not steal," "Thou shalt not bear false witness." That would be saying to the boy, "Do not strike *yourself*." When my neighbour is a part of myself, the rules are taken down from the nursery wall and nailed to Christ's Cross. Law merges into love. Even as the light of the separate planets merges in the morning sun, so do the Ten Statutes melt in one blaze of glory which comprehends and transcends them all—the fire of the heart.

Enlarge my self-nature, O my Father! What I need to make me unselfish is not fewer rooms, but more. Give me more rooms in my dwelling, O Lord! Help me to feel that the life of my brother man is a part of *my* life! Unite me to him by a common centre! Give me the sense that he is a member of my body! Let me experience his pain as my pain, his joy as my joy! When I speak of my self-interest, may I mean his interest as well as mine! May every disappointment to him be felt by me as against my interest! When I hear of his impoverish-

ment, may it be to me the tidings of a personal loss; when I hear of his promotion, may it be to me the tidings of a personal gain! Help me to understand the tears of Thy Christ over Jerusalem! Help me to understand the tears of Thy Christ over Bethany! Help me to understand that He wept for His own flesh, wept for the members of His own body! Help me to realise that the wounds of Jerusalem wounded *Him*, that the griefs of Bethany grieved Him! Help me to see that His sympathy came from the rent in His own heart! Help me to know that, when He saw the wheels of life bring hunger and thirst and cold and sickness to others, He said by Divine telepathy, "They did it unto *Me*"! When I have comprehended that Life of Love, there will be no need any longer to inscribe the rules upon my nursery wall.

XXIII

THE PRAYER PROMPTED BY HEAVEN

"Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance."—Psa. ii. 8.

THE words are spoken by God to the Messiah. The Father prompts His Christ what to ask for. I believe all successful prayer to be a prompting from the Father. My prayer does not change His mind; it is His mind that *dictates* my prayer. Efficacious prayer is not so much a petition as a prophecy; it is my Father saying to me, "This is My will; ask *this*." And what is this prayer which the Father prompts the Christ to offer? It is worth while to mark it, for we may be sure that we too may offer it unconditionally—that it is always on the lines of God's will. It is the prayer that Christ may possess the *secular* world. "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the *secular* world for Thine inheritance"—so speaks the Father to all who wish that Christ's kingdom should come. And

who at the present day does not wish it? Is it not the aim of our day to make Christ a secular power! Do we not want to give Him an inheritance in things which were once deemed outside! His religion used to be something apart from the world; it was limited to the sanctuary. But now we are claiming for Him the world also. We are resisting the separation between Nature and Grace. We begin to feel that Nature is also a grace from our Father. We have ceased to speak of *earthly* beauty, of temporal gifts, of natural virtues. To us, all beauty is Divine, all gifts eternal, all virtues graces of the Spirit. We have claimed for Jesus what the tempter offered Him—the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. We have claimed the wine of Cana and the feast of Bethany. We have claimed the Sabbath walk in the cornfields and the Sabbath work out of church and the good work done by one who followed not. We have done for the common things of life what was done for the little children—we have brought them to be blessed by Jesus.

Ever more, O Christ, may Thy secular kingdom come! Ever in deeper measure may the Father give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance! I do not ask that my secular gifts should be put to a sacred use. I do not

ask that my voice should sing in a choir, that my poetry should write hymns, that my architecture should build churches. No; that would be for Thee only a partial victory. I want these things to be for Thee while remaining in their old sphere. I want my voice to sing for Thee the *world's* songs. I want my brush to paint for Thee the world's scene. I want my poetry to hymn for Thee the world's story. I would claim for Thee, not alone the old powers, but the old fields. I would make Thine my *social* hours, Thine my domestic joys, Thine my moments of gaiety. I would dedicate to Thee my music and my dancing, my buying and my selling, my winning and my wearing. I would value all my powers, not only as a gift *from* Thee, but as a gift *for* Thee. The things once claimed for the heathen I would make *Thine* inheritance.

XXIV

THE ABUSE OF RELIGIOUS FAITH

"Then the devil setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down, for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee."—MATT. iv. 5, 6.

PROFESSOR TYNDALL, in the interest of a scientific scepticism, once made a proposal to the religious world. He offered to subject the question of prayer's value to the test of an experiment. He proposed to have two hospitals, each filled with sick people. He suggested that the one should be made a subject for prayer, and the other not. If the hospital which was made the subject of prayer turned out more convalescents than the other, it would be in favour of the Christian doctrine; if not, it would show the valuelessness of the whole process. Until I heard Professor Tyndall's proposal, I never understood the meaning of the second temptation recorded

by St. Matthew. But then it all flashed upon me. For the cases are almost identical. The tempter says to Jesus, "You can put the power of your faith to the test of a public experiment. Get up to that pinnacle of the temple at the foot of which the crowd are gathered. You will never have a better opportunity to convince a multitude of the power of prayerful faith. Throw yourself from the height before the eyes of the crowd, and let them see whether God will or will not keep His promise." In both cases a negative result was expected. And it was right to expect such a result—but not on the ground that the promise of an answer to prayer was a delusion. The truth is, neither the hospital test nor the wilderness test gave room for any prayer at all. The object suggested to Jesus was not really trust in the Father; it was an attempt to dazzle the multitude. The object suggested to the Christian Society was not really the recovery of certain inmates of a hospital; it was an experiment on God. The recovery of the favoured men would have been no more an answer to prayer than the death of the unfavoured. Prayer can have only one object —the relief of want. You can experiment on wireless telegraphy without reference to the message—but not on prayer. The prayer *is* the

message. Not the word but the wish, not the sound but the sympathy, not the kneeling but the need, makes mine a prayer. It must be breathed by brotherhood; it must be lit by love; it must be kindled by kindness; it must be fanned by fellowship; it must be plumed by pity; it must be sustained by sacrifice; it must be winged by the wants of the wilderness.

My soul, let there be no display in thy worship of the Father! If thou cast thyself into His arms, let it not be in the sight of the multitude! Do not feel proud of thy prayers!—they ought to be times of heaviness. Do not say, "The multitude will see what a pinnacle I stand on!" Thy pinnacle should be a point of solitude—a place and hour when thou art alone with God. Have no reason for thy prayer beyond its own necessity! Do not cry to win sympathy, but only because the wells of the heart are overflowing! Do not pray to show piety, but only because the wants of the heart are overwhelming! Do not intercede for a hospital to prove God, but only because, there, the friends of the heart are overburdened! Let thy prayer be the flight of the swallow toward the hope of a summer! Let thy prayer be the song of the lark inspired by the thought of earth's

morning! Let thy prayer be the flow of the stream to bear a draught to the dry, parched land! Let thy prayer be the flash of genius which comes, not because it can, but because it must! Let thy prayer be the spontaneity of love whose intercession for the hospital is prompted, not by human science, but by human sighs—which labours by its own light, pleads by its own pity, worships by its own want, comforts by its own compassion! So shalt thou foil the tempter's power.

XXV

ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES

"Against Thy holy child Jesus, both Herod and Pontius Pilate were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done."—Acts iv. 27, 28.

THIS is a remarkable passage. It takes us by surprise. It is a literary surprise. The sentence ends just in the opposite way to what we are prepared for. We expect it to read thus: "Against Thy holy child Jesus both Herod and Pilate were gathered together to *circumvent* the course of Thy Divine will." Instead of that, we read, "Against Thy holy child Jesus both Herod and Pilate were gathered together to do whatever Thy counsel had *determined* to be done." The idea is that their effort of opposition to the Divine will proved to be a stroke of alliance with it. The measures they took to wreck the ship became the very means of keeping the ship afloat. They met together in a council of

war against Christ; unconsciously to themselves they signed a treaty for the promotion of Christ's glory. They thought they were making a will in favour of His enemies; they were really bequeathing all their wealth to the Man of Nazareth. They decreed that He should die; that decree was their contribution of palm-leaves. No one has done so much for the triumphal entry of Jesus into the world as did Herod and Pilate when they met together to shut the door. They *opened* the door in their effort to lock it. They made a *laurel* for Jesus in trying to make a cypress. In the darkness of night they constructed what seemed to be a cross; they came back in the morning, and, lo! it was a crown!

My brother, God never thwarts adverse circumstances; that is not His method. I have often been struck with these words—"He rideth upon the wings of the wind." They are most suggestive. Our God does not *beat down* the storms that rise against Him; He rides upon them; He works through them. You are often surprised that so many thorny paths are allowed to be open for the good—how that aspiring boy Joseph is put in a dungeon—how that beautiful child Moses is cast into the Nile. You would have expected Providence to have interrupted the opening of

these pits destined for destruction. Well, He might have done so; He might have said to the storm, "Peace, be still!" But there was a more excellent way—to ride upon it. God said, "I will not shut the pit, but I will make it the road to the throne of Egypt; I will not dry the Nile, but I will make it the channel to a great sea; I will not prevent the cross, but I will make it the world's crown." You too should ride upon the wings of the wind. Say not, "I must take shelter till the storm passes." Say not, "God will sweep it away that I may come nearer to Himself." Nay, it is the storm that will *bring* you nearer. He maketh the clouds His chariot. Leap into His chariot! Commit yourself to the black horses! Go out to *meet* the storm! Recline upon the bosom of the cloud! Ride upon the wings of the wind! And they will bear you home. They will bring you to the Ararat of rest. Your days of toil will make your Sabbath; your desert will make your Canaan; your cross will make your crown. Herod and Pilate may divert you from your way; but they will send you by a *nearer* road to the Promised Land.

XXVI

THE FIRST SPHERE OF REGENERATION

"He that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother."—Luke vii. 15.

"HE delivered him to his mother." Is it not a lame and impotent conclusion! Would you not have expected that if a man were raised from death to life it would be for the sake of entering into higher spheres! We hear of men every day raised from death to life, or, as we say, "regenerated"; and we always take it for granted that when the new life has come it will soar up in Elijah's chariot, will leave the old things behind. But are we right in taking this for granted! Why should not the new life rather be given to fill the old sphere *better!* Have any of us, when we are dead in trespasses and in sin, been adequate to what we call the lower sphere! Do you think an unregenerate man is well fitted for the domestic duties of this widow's son at

Nain! Certainly not. Such a man will be no more at home in the family of earth than in the family of heaven. When Christ infuses new life into a man it is not to do new work. The old work has not been properly done. It is not as if he were too advanced for his present school and had to be promoted to a higher school. He has not been *up to* his village school; it has been beyond him. He has never been able to fulfil the domestic duties of the Nain household. It is to help him to fulfil these duties that the new life comes. Doubtless it has larger spheres beyond; but this is its opening sphere. Elijah's chariot must not begin by bearing him up; it must bear him round. It must go over the old circle where he used to walk with tottering steps and work with feeble hands. It must first let him down at his own door. He must enter the old home with a new spirit. He must resume the household task with a fresh heart. He must do by the will what he had tried to do by the law. Truly it is a grand saying that when Jesus had raised the young man "He delivered him to his mother"!

Lord, it is not for *new* work I want Thy Spirit. I do not seek loftier spheres. I want to revisit the old scenes. If Thou wilt open a new lens in the eye, the things I should like

first to see are the former things. I should like to go back to the haunts of early days. I should like to find new beauties in the old flowers, fresh lights in the familiar faces. I would not be transplanted to the stars till I had seen the earth. May Thy Spirit lead me back—back to what once was my wilderness! May it lead me to the ancient pastures with a restored soul! May it deliver me again into the ties of human relationship—into the family circle, the home duties, the domestic round! May I, like Lazarus risen from the dead, resume my place at the social board—dispense, with heavenly hand, the hospitalities of earth! Let me weave by the light of Eternity the garments which I wove by the light of Time!—only when I am raised into newness of life shall I do the work of the village of Nain.

XXVII

THE NEED OF PRELIMINARY SHELTER

"Hide the outcasts."—Isa. xvi. 3.

WHAT a singular expression of philanthropy! I should have expected the words to be, "Reform the outcasts, cleanse the outcasts, redeem the outcasts!" But the prophet saw deeper. He saw that there is something wanted *previous* to reform—protection, hiding. He has struck the keynote of the difference between the gospel of the Pagan and the gospel of the Christ. The Pagan says, "Let them be cleansed and come in"; Christ says, "Let them come in and be cleansed." The Pagan says, "Wash your stains and enter the temple"; Christ says, "Enter the temple and I will wash your stains." The Pagan says, "Put on your best robe and repair to the banquet"; Christ says, "Repair to the banquet, and I will give you the best robe." The most unique feature of Christ is His claim to be

"a hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest." What does that mean? Clearly this, that He will take you in before the calm comes. He does not say, "When it is fine weather I will visit you." No; He says, "I will come to you when it is yet wind and rain; I will bring a canvas tent, and shelter you." Hundreds will come out to you when the storm has *ceased;* but you will need something more than that. Is there to be no refuge *in* the storm! Your brother-man is waiting for your signs of good character. He is looking at the ship tossing on the sea; he says, "When it is calm, I will take a boat and bring you in." But will no one bring the boat when the wind is high and the waves are rough and the tempest is roaring! Will no one enter into your life when it is battered and bruised and broken! Will no one take you up when you are disgraced and tabooed and scorned! Will no one send a dove into your deluge while yet the peak of Ararat is unseen, while yet the rainbow is undiscerned in the sky! One alone has trodden that winepress, and there was none of the people with Him—the Perfectly Sinless, the Son of Man.

Come out upon my sea, O Lord, come out upon my sea! While the waters are still rolling, while the tempest still is high, come

out upon my sea! Walk upon my waters while yet they are troubled, ere ever a voice has said, "Peace, be still"! Unto whom can I call but unto Thee! No one else will meet me in the storm. Plato will not; he will meet only calm souls. Moses will not; his Sinai has no cleft for the uncleansed. John Baptist will not; he cuts down all trees that bear no fruit. The voices of this world are all crying, "Ye that have found rest, enter into the kingdom!" But I hear another voice, a unique voice, a voice that reaches further down the stream, "Come unto Me all ye that labour, and I will *give* you rest!" It says, "Let your warrant be your want; let your claim be your cloud; let your right be your wretchedness; let your token of sonship be your tossing in the storm!" It calls to me in my cold; it rings to me in my rags; it peals to me in my poverty; it trills to me in my trespasses; it kills for me the fatted calf when I am still in the far country. Many voices have offered me a home for my quiet hours; Thou alone hast promised me a covert in my storm.

XXVIII

THE CHANGE IN RELIGIOUS ASPIRATIONS

"Oh that I had a lodging place in the wilderness!"—JER. ix. 2.

WHEN I read the words of Jeremiah I always think of the familiar lines of a Scottish poet:—

> "Bird of the wilderness,
> Blithesome and cumberless,
> Oh to abide in the desert with thee!"

There is one thing common to both utterances; they both desire solitude for the sake of a *joy*. When Jeremiah cries, "Oh that I had a lodging place in the wilderness!" he is not seeking the desert because of its *pain*. This has been the common reason for the seclusion of the religious devotee—a wish to endure penance for his sin. But Jeremiah's motive is the reverse of this. He wants to get away from the world that

he may enjoy the unobstructed presence of God. Love delights to be *alone* with its object. If it seeks the wilderness, it is as a luxury. Jeremiah desires that luxury. The desert to him is a paradise, because he thinks of it as a trysting-place where he and his God can meet, alone. Not for its repulsiveness, but for its attractiveness, does he court that silent hour. He says, "The place will be no wilderness to *me*. The love of my heart will be there. There, far from the din of men, far from the madding crowd, I shall meet Thee, alone; and the wilderness shall break forth into singing and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. Every thorn shall seem a fir-tree, every briar shall seem a myrtle-tree; the lion shall appear as a lamb and the leopard as a kid. For my love will transform my visions, and my heart will make all things new. I shall forget in Thy rest the city's roar. I shall lose on Thy breast life's bustle. I shall ignore under Thy wing Time's withering hand. The conflict will be calmed. The vanities will be vanquished. The fashions will be faded. The ambitions will be amputated. The desires will be dead. The cares will be cancelled. The favour of men will be flouted. When I meet Thee in the solitudes of the wilderness, the world will pass away."

And yet, my soul, Jeremiah's cry can no more be thine. Why can it no more be thine? Is it because thy love has grown cold? Is it because the world is dearer and God less precious? Is it because to meet face to face with Him is no longer thy heart's joy? Nay, it is none of these. It is because the desert is no longer the place of meeting. Once my trysting-place was a tree—the symbol of rural loneliness; I stood under Abraham's oak or Elijah's juniper leaves. But now I have no need to seek my God there. The rural places are no longer the only consecrated places. My God has gone to the city—to the place where the concourse flows; my God has gone to the busy mart—to the place where commerce grows; my God has gone to the schoolhouse —to the place where culture sows. My God is at the marriage feast where Cana's wine is shed; my God is in the famished crowd where pity's board is spread; my God is with the helpless poor with no roof overhead. He waits for me in the songs of Galilee; He waits for me in the tears of Bethany; He waits for me in the crosses of Jerusalem. Not beside the tree but beside the traffic does He now love best to dwell. Not in the forest but in the forum, not in the solitude but in the street, not in the void but in the vortex, does He find His

acceptable year. He has said, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest"; but the place where He shall give me rest is not in the *wilderness.*

XXIX

THE KEY TO PRACTICAL SERVICE

"Then the Spirit took me up . . . and the Lord said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee."—Ezek. iii. 12, 22.

THE words seem an anti-climax; it is the rapturous for the sake of the commonplace. The Spirit takes Ezekiel up just for the purpose of sending him down. He is lifted, first of all, into a state of ecstasy. He is put on a height—far above the dust and din of the common way; he is brought into the immediate presence of God. But God says to him, "I have brought you up here just to tell you that this is not the place for our communion, just to bid you go down into the plain and seek My Presence *there*." One asks, "Why bring him up at all! Was he not in the plain originally! Why tell him to ascend the hill for the mere purpose of resuming the spot where he

had first stood!" But do you not see the extreme beauty of the thought. No one can do the duties of the plain till he has had a breath of the mountain. It is not by commonplace thought that we perform commonplace duties; it is by high and noble aspirations. Do you think God calls Moses up to the mount that he may *live* on the mount. No; He calls him up that He may fit him for level ground. He gives him a breath of heaven that he may be able to teach the common things of earth—to say, "Honour your father and mother, do not swear, do not lie nor cheat nor kill." It seems a lame and impotent conclusion for the sublimities of Sinai; but it is not. We need morning light for our afternoon labour. It is by the height we serve the plain; it is by the love of heaven we do the work of earth; it is by the inspiration of beauty from the Promised Land that we tread the sands of the desert with unstained feet.

Ye whose work is pre-eminently on the plain, get a preliminary glimpse of God! Come up and see the sunrise ere you go down into the toils of the wilderness! Ye who labour among the sick, come first to the top of the hill!—gaze on the mountain glory ere you seek the burdens of the day! Ye who labour among the poor, come first to the top of the hill!—take a deep

draught of hope ere you traverse the dens and alleys! Ye who labour among the lapsed, come first to the top of the hill!—get a sight of human possibilities ere you tread the path of tears! For it is not despair that nerves you, ye workers in waste and wilderness. They among whom you sojourn may be sunk in depravity, dead in trespasses and sin; yet it is not despair that nerves you. Paul says we are saved by hope; yes, and we save others by hope. Ye that nurse in the hospitals, what is it you see? Is it the dilapidated form on the bed? No, it is the resurrection body—the body as God designed it. Ye that toil in the penitentiaries, what is it you see? Is it the depraved soul walking amid the tombs? No, it is the soul set free—the soul as God painted it. Never lose sight of the Christ when you stand in Bethlehem's manger! never lose sound of the music when you watch in Bethlehem's night! for it is the Christ that makes the manger bearable, it is the music that makes the night tolerable. Beside the cradle of present impotence, behold the treasures laid! through the night of lonely watching, hear the angels sing! And your helpfulness will be greater by reason of the glory; your watchfulness will be deeper by reason of the song. Hope, and you will help; be bright, and you will bear;

enjoy the vision of triumph, and you will endure the vale of tears. They who have mounted up as eagles in the morning, shall in the afternoon walk and not faint.

XXX

THE ARREST OF PREMATURE OLD-AGE

"Her sun is gone down while it was yet day."—Jer. xv. 9.

THERE is a sadness about all premature things—even where the thing is in itself good. I do not think that the spectacle of a precocious child is quite free from sadness. Fair as manhood is, and much as we desire that one day the child should become a man, we do not like to see a premature birth of the man; it detracts from our interest in the child. But if even with bright things prematurity repels, what shall we say of sombre things! If we do not wish to see a meridian sun at dawn, what shall we say of beholding the evening shades at noonday! There is no spectacle so sad as premature old-age. When I speak of old-age, I mean the age of the spirit. There are souls which lose their youth early in the day. There are hearts which are bereft of their elastic spring while it is yet morning. It need not be a

grief which causes it; I think it is oftener the failure to find an imaginary joy. Youth's heart is often chilled because it sees not, without, the fairyland which it feels within. It is rather disappointed *with* the world than disappointed *by* the world. It is not that something possessed is broken; it is that something expected has not come. The cry of youth is not "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him"; it is rather "Where is the promise of His coming!" It is the weeping, not over flowers that are faded, but over flowers that never bloomed. That is the sorrow of youth, the care of youth, the tearfulness of youth; it is that which often makes youth old before its time.

Lord, save the young from this danger of a premature old-age! Thou alone canst save them, for Thou alone canst fulfil their dream. Nature cannot fulfil their dream; it has nothing to correspond to their high ideal. In the visions of fancy they have seen a form of perfect beauty; but in the world of reality they have sought it in vain. It is not reached by the things around them. It is brighter than the sun. It is more to be desired than gold, than the finest gold. It is sweeter than the honeycomb. It is fairer than the children of men. The waking world attains not the glory of the night watches, and

youth grows old amidst it because she misses her dream. But *Thou* canst fulfil that dream, O Lord; Thou canst reveal to youth the reality of fancy's picture. Show her the living Christ! Show her that there is with Thee an image which is altogether lovely! Show her that Thou holdest in Thy bosom what eye hath not seen and ear hath not heard! Tell her that Thou canst revive her drooping flower! Tell her that her dream was no delusion, her fancy no fiction! Tell her that the beautiful image she beheld in the night watches was no phantom of the brain! Tell her that her ideal is *coming*, that her desire will be satisfied! She wants her romance made true; if she found it true, the white locks would vanish and the birds would sing again. Vindicate her visions, O Lord! Restore the romance of the morning! Defend the sanity of the dream! Reveal the reality of that music which ushered in her day! When she sees the face of Christ she will be a child once more.

XXXI

THE TEST OF OUR HOPEFULNESS

"It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."—LAM. iii. 26.

WHAT a singular combination—hope and quiet waiting! It is like a union of poetry and prose. Does it not seem an incongruous mixture of sentiments! We associate hope with impulse; quiet waiting is surely the want of impulse! Hope is a state of flight; waiting implies repose. Hope is the soul on the wing; waiting is the soul in the nest. Hope is the eagerness of expectancy; waiting is a condition of placid calm. Is not that a strange union of feelings to put into one breast! No; it is a sublimely happy marriage—the happiest conceivable. There is no test of hope like quiet waiting. If you want to measure the strength of a man's hope, you must measure the quietness of his waiting. Our hope is never so weak as

when we are excited. I have seen two men who were engaged in the same cause, and who were equally bent on that cause, affected quite differently in an argument. The one was fiery, impetuous, vehement, tempted to lose temper and prompted to be abusive; the other was calm, cool, quiet, disposed to be deferential and inclined to be conciliatory. Yet the second was the man of sure hope. He was calm because he was fearless, he was silent because he was sanguine. He had seen the star in the east and he knew it was travelling westward. He did not care to argue about it, to protest about it, to lose his temper about it. He was so sure of its coming that he was willing to make concessions. He could afford to be gentle, he could afford to be generous, in the light of the morning star.

Lord, the man who saw Thy glory in Patmos was the man who slept in Thy bosom. So shall it be with me. If I have a clear vision I shall have a tranquil temper. I do not wonder that St. John became so gentle; the quickened eye makes the quiet heart. Open Thy heavens, O Lord, and the dove will come. The dove cannot come until Thy heavens be opened. I see a storm gathering in the west; clouds are drifting, winds are rising, birds are flying; my prospect is obscured toward the setting sun. I hear men cry, "The old faith is vain, the

old promise is vain!" I am wroth with these men; I am abusive; I call them atheists; I hurl anathemas against them. Why am I thus inflamed? My Christ, it is because I myself doubt of Thee. It is because I have lost sight of Thy bow in the cloud, of Thine anchor in the storm. It is my self-pity makes me angry, it is my hopelessness makes me unquiet. Unveil mine eyes, O Lord! Give me a glimpse of Thy glory! Send me a cluster of the grapes of Eshcol! Let me have one view from the heights of Pisgah! Open Thy heaven but for a moment to my inner sight! Then the dove will come, mildness will come, peace will come. It will be with me as it was with Moses. He saw the desert illuminated with Thy burning bush; therefore he was the meekest of men. Illuminate my desert, and I too shall be meek. Make me sure of Thee, and I shall cease to strive or cry. Establish mine own heart, and I shall be gentle with my brother. Light my candle within, and I shall be tender to the mists without. Conviction will calm me; certitude will soften me; the rays of the morning will mellow me; the charm of a cloudless soul will give me charity. I shall love my brother better when I see my Father nearer. Thou shalt keep the man in perfect peace whose hope is stayed on Thee.

XXXII

THE HIGHEST VIEW OF GOD'S GOVERNMENT

"The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not."—JOHN i. 5.

IS there any greater comfort than the faith in an overruling Providence? Is there any higher satisfaction possible to a human mind than the belief that God will, some day, scatter our darkness and shine forth resplendent? Yes; there is possible a higher comfort than that—the comfort of knowing that the darkness is itself God's shining. There is one thing better than an overruling Providence, and that is a ruling Providence—a Providence in whose government there is nothing to be overruled. That is the Bible view of God. The popular idea of Divine love is that it is something which will ultimately conquer the clouds. The Bible's thought is much more drastic; it is that Divine love "reacheth *unto* the clouds,"

that there is "no night there." The Bible doctrine is not that God's child will be recompensed in heaven for his losses on earth. It is that what on earth appears a loss has in heaven the aspect of a gain—just as night in one hemisphere makes morning in the other. The column of deaths here is a column of births yonder. The interrupted work here is a fresh energy yonder. Seeming accident here is result of law yonder. Incapacitating pain here is promotion to service yonder. Doors shut here are doors open yonder. Weights impeding here make wings for our sympathy yonder. Narrow lanes here enlarge our field yonder. Seasons of condolence here are times of congratulation yonder. It is not that earth's night is heaven's day—that while I am in silence the angels are in music; that would be but a poor solace. It is that to the light of heaven earth's night is *earth's* day—that my shadows are shining, that my silence is vocal, that my discord is music, that my burdens are burnished with gold. The darkness is light.

Lord, I should not like to think that to any child of Thine this world is a battle between cloud and sunshine. It is not enough for me to believe that one day Thou shalt say, "Let there be light!" No, my Father, rather would I have my solace to be, "*This* is the day the Lord hath

made; we will rejoice and be glad in *it*." When I stand under the cloud, I would feel that to other eyes, to Thine eyes, the cloud itself is clearness. I would feel that the cloud is a part of the Transfiguration glory, that my shadow is another's sunshine, that my night is Thy morning. I would feel that even while the rain is on the river the sun is on the hill. I would feel that there are showers that belong to the shining, mists which are appropriate to the morning, minor chords which are inseparable from melodious cadence. I cannot rest in a love *to come*, in a light to come. I cannot believe in the suspension of Thy music, in the silence of Thy voice. Sometimes in the dense darkness I lie down to sleep in what I deem a trackless desert. Men say, "God will bring thee home to-morrow." Nay, my Father, rather do I hope that, when I wake to-morrow, I shall find that all the night I have been lying at Thy palace door.

XXXIII

THE SECRET OF REVERENT RESEARCH

"They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward."—JER. l. 5.

ONE is inclined to say, Why insert the words, "with their faces thitherward"? If they had to ask the way to Zion, what did it matter in which direction their faces were turned meantime? I answer, it mattered very greatly. The value of a man's search for truth depends very much on the direction in which his look is turned. Religious research may or may not be a valuable thing; it depends on the mental attitude of the inquirer. In the opening of St. Matthew's Gospel there are two inquiries made concerning the birth of Jesus. The wise men ask, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" Herod "inquired diligently what time the star appeared." Where lay the difference? Just in the direction of their faces. The wise men were seeking Jesus that they might worship

Him; Herod was seeking Jesus that he might destroy Him. In the hour of your investigations, consider carefully whither your face is turned—toward Zion or away from Zion; it makes all the difference in the world. Do you wish to find blots or do you wish to erase blots? You cannot even be impartial in your search. The book into whose genuineness you inquire has a photograph on the front page—a face of exceeding beauty and compelling power. If you have any eye for loveliness, you must begin the study with that picture in your soul. I am told that a judge should be impartial. In matters of land, yes; in matters of character, no. In a criminal trial I would have the judge assume the veracity of the prisoner till the facts have disproved it. So should it be with you in your trial of the Bible. Assume its veracity till the facts disprove it. The Psalmist had a twofold wish—"to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His tabernacle"; but the beholding of the beauty came first, the inquiry afterwards; and verily he was right. Go and do thou likewise. Begin by looking at the picture. Meet Christ at the *door* of the tabernacle. Let Christ precede criticism. Let the gaze precede the grammar. Let the love precede the learning. Let the song precede the science. Let the heart precede the history. Let the prayer precede the probing. Let the spirit

precede the scrutiny. Ask by all means the way to Zion; but ask with your face thitherward.

Lord, do not judge me by what I find, but by what I wish to find! I am still asking my way. There are still clouds and darkness round about me; I have not seen the King in His strength. But I have seen the King in His beauty. I have gazed on the picture of Jesus on the front leaf of my Bible; and I am in love with that picture. I am eager to meet its original. I stretch my hands and cry, "O that I could find Him!" My heart has outrun my experience; it has entered *first* into the empty tomb. My reason is still asking its way to the sepulchre; but my heart is already bringing spices. My reason is still inquiring for the manger; but my heart has already seen the star. My reason is still in the wilderness; but my heart is already on the mount. My reason is still tossing on the sea; but my heart is already sleeping in the haven. My reason is still climbing the Dolorous Way; but my heart already cries, "It is finished!" My reason wrestles for the daybreak; but my heart is already leaping over Peniel. My reason searches vainly for the risen Christ in Jerusalem; but my heart has already gone before it into Galilee, and there it has seen the Lord. I have not yet reached Zion; but my face is thitherward.

XXXIV

THE PRAYER THAT FOLLOWS ITS ANSWER

"Before they call, I will answer."—Isa. lxv. 24.

THERE is a region of prayer in which the gift comes before the request for it. The popular notion is that we first ask a thing and then get it. But in truth, with all spiritual desires, it is just the opposite; we first get a thing and then ask it. When a man prays for material comforts his request precedes his possession. But when he prays for spiritual comforts his possession precedes his request. There is a thirst which is really created by its partial gratification. When you cry for physical water it is because you are in want of water. But when you cry for the water of life it is because you have already tasted of the fountain; God has answered you before your call. The thirst for earthly water comes from parched lips; but the thirst for God comes from lips already moistened.

That is what makes the hunger after righteousness a blessed thing. It can only come from possession. God alone can cry for God; heaven alone can desire heaven; goodness alone can crave goodness. There are prayers whose arrow is sped, not by the rainbow of night, but by the rainbow of morning. They are shot forth, not by the empty, but by the full, hand. My prayers for Christ are like the murmur of the shell; they are the voice of the parent sea within me. Their cry is a memory. They are not so much in search of something new as in touch with something old. They are not voices of my poverty, but of my wealth. They are not winged by the famine of the far country, but by the music and dancing of the Father's house. Without the memory of that home all the scarcity of the swine-husks would never have evoked the cry, "I will arise, and go to my Father."

Lord, I am longing for Thee, and thereby I know that I have found Thee. I could not call on Thee unless Thine answer had already come. I shrink from my crimson stains; but it is Thy light that has revealed them. I never should have known the famine unless I had tasted Thy bread. The land has not really become more destitute; it is I who have grown more exacting. There was as much famine yesterday, and I never felt it. Why do I feel it to-day? It is

because I have tasted Thy bread. I never spoke of swine-husks until then. I learned my thirst from a cluster of the grapes of Eshcol. I learned my hunger from Thy manna in the wilderness. I learned my rags from the sight of Thy seamless robe. It is not my prayer that has brought Thine answer; it is Thine answer that has brought my prayer. I did not feel my darkness until I saw upon Thy hand the glittering ring—the ring prepared for me. I did not fear the silence until I heard upon the height the strains of merry music—the music meant for me. I did not experience the shame until I caught on the brow of morning the far-off gaze of Thy pursuing eye—the eye that sparkled for me. That is why my prayer is precious in Thy sight. Thou seest not its poverty but its promise, Thou beholdest not its sackcloth but its gold; for the cry has come from a head that is crowned, and the humility has been wakened by the summit of the hill.

XXXV

THE SERVICE RENDERED BY DEATH

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; Thou hast loosed my bonds."—Psa. cxvi. 15, 16.

I HAVE a peculiar idea as to the meaning of this psalm. It is popularly thought to be a psalm of thanksgiving for recovery from sickness. But why, then, should the restored man break into the rapturous cry, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints"! Is this not an incongruous utterance in a thanksgiving for recovery—in a thanksgiving for the *averting* of death? I think it is; and therefore I do not believe that the psalm is a thanksgiving for such recovery. I think it is an attempt to depict the idea of a man's recovery not on this, but on the other, side of death. It is an imagination of immortality preceding the revelation of im-

mortality. The writer conceives himself to have waked from his sleep of exhaustion in a new and revived Jerusalem—to have waked strong and well, renovated from fatigue and loosed from his old bonds of infirmity. He conceives himself to be looking back upon his former state—on the days when he was bowed down by the weakness of the flesh. He had expected that death would be the culmination of that weakness. To his astonishment he finds that death has been his deliverance—that instead of being a prison-house, it has loosed his bonds and set the prisoner free. It has emancipated him, disencumbered him, given him wings. It has made him a more useful servant to the Almighty, more capable of work, more profitable for labour. It has given to God an army of invigorated souls, stronger to fight and hardier to bear; and, looking upon heaven's gain, the Psalmist cries, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

My soul, there is no more frequent plaint of thine than thy dirge over the departed great. Thy cry is, "To what purpose is this waste!" The Psalmist thinks it is a *redeeming* from waste—a gain to the harvest-field of God. I have often heard thee say, "If God spares me." Hast thou analysed these words? If a servant

asks to be absent from household duties, we say, "I will spare you for a few days"—submit to the *want* for a few days. When God spares a good servant He submits to a want. He is in need of all ministering spirits yonder. The harvest to be reaped is plenteous, but the labourers are few. It is not every redeemed life that is fit to be a ministering spirit. There are hosts among the saved who are not ready to be angels. Millions can serve by day; but they who "serve day and night" must have come out of great tribulation—washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. Hast thou ever pondered the words, "Pray the Lord of the harvest that He will send labourers into His harvest." Hast thou ever considered that the answer to that prayer may be just the death of the saint—the very thing which makes thee think the prayer denied. Hast thou ever reflected that there is less mystery in the death of the good than in the death of the ignoble. There is a cry from the Macedonia of God "Come over and help us!" There is a cry from the eternal sea, "Send men to Joppa!"—men who can embark upon the deep and breast the waves. Forget not the labourers hired at the eleventh hour—the hour thou callest death! Think not that these have escaped the burden and the heat!—they are called to a weightier

burden and a heat more potent. There are myriads who enter the fields where thy Father's seed is sown, but methinks the most precious in His sight are they who enter by the valley of the shadow.

XXXVI

THE HELP OF BEAUTY TO GOODNESS

"The light of the body is the eye. If, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."—MATT. vi. 22.

OUR Lord says that when a man looks at the sunshine it is not only his eye that is affected; his whole body is influenced by the light. His pulse is quickened, his blood is accelerated, his step is lightened, his arm is strengthened, his voice is vivified. Even so, Christ says that in the moral world everything depends on what a man looks at—his ideal. He says that the great question is, What is that picture of heroism which you have set before your inward eye? He exclaims in effect, "It is no use to lay down rules of morality. What is your model of perfection, your ideal of beauty, your standard of excellence? —everything depends on that. If you admire

that which is really noble, the picture before the eye will permeate the whole life; if you admire that which is mean and debasing, the picture before the eye will corrupt the entire nature. Show me what a man is looking at, and I will show you what his life will be. Tell me his favourite author, his favourite artist, his favourite pleasure, and I will tell you where his strength or weakness lies. Bring him into a room crowded with pictures and watch where his eye first lights and longest lingers; there will his heart be also. It is in the direction of the eye that you must seek the aim of the life."

Beware, ye mothers and teachers, how ye furnish the halls of fancy! Beware what ideal you suggest to the admiration of the child! Do not point to Cain and say, "I have gotten a man from the Lord"! if to the young eye you make Cain a hero, you will soon to the young heart make violence heroic. Do not point to a physical conqueror and say, "That is the Messiah"! if the power that crushes becomes beautiful, it will ere long seem dutiful. Do not point to a covetous man and say, "There goes just Lot"! if you make selfishness an ideal, it will soon become a practice. Point the child to the greatness of some things deemed foolish! Point him to the Man of

Calvary and say, "What a strength was *there*"! Show him the sacredness of sacrifice, the power of pity, the kingliness of being kind! Tell him that there may be an infancy over which the angels sing, hours of childhood which are "about the Father's business," days of tender youth in which the very heavens are opened, seasons of wilderness want which are themselves the ministration of God, moments of death in which a soul has saved the world! Reveal to him the majesty of the manger and the coronation of the Cross! My Christ must be crowned ere I can serve Him—crowned beforehand, crowned to the eye. In vain you will point to Calvary if you teach me first that self-surrender is a shameful thing. In vain you will cry, "Follow Jesus!" if you have impressed me with the notion that meekness is cowardice, that mercy is weakness, that purity is effeminate, that grief is unmanly, that peacemaking is unheroic. You must guide the eye ere you guide the steps. Before you preach Christ, crown Him Lord of all! Wreath Calvary with flowers! Fill Gethsemane with music! Strew the Dolorous Way with palm-leaves! Write in golden letters the old old story! Let it appeal first to the eye, to the admiration! Encircle its clouds with a rainbow; let its tears, even while they fall, glitter

in the sun! Let the Star of Bethlehem lead me up the heights of Golgotha! You will imprint Christ upon my life when you have made Him beautiful to my eye.

XXXVII

THE MERCY OF GOD

"I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger, for I am God, and not man."—Hos. xi. 9.

THIS is a saying very unique, very original, very sublime. It is the utterance which of all others we should have least expected—least expected even from the prophet himself. He has been expressing in the loudest terms his sense of the Divine horror of sin. He has been putting into the lips of God the most withering, the most scathing denunciations of surrounding evil. And the sequel we look for is, "I will utterly destroy these wicked men, and will sweep away their name and their remembrance." Instead of that, we have the startling conclusion, "I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger, for I am God, and not man." I say, startling, for a sudden calm is as startling as a sudden storm. The wind

has been rising to a climax, climbing step by step the ladder of indignation. All at once, it drops. It does not subside, it does not soften, it does not moderate its fury; it goes down altogether—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. In India the night passes into day without a twilight; here God's frown passes instantaneously into a smile. And the strangest thing of all is the reason for the lenity—"For I am God, and not man." One would think this a reason for a more drastic sentence. The natural view is, if even the blunted conscience of your brother man condemns you to death, much more must an all-holy God. Not thus says Hosea. To him the strongest is the gentlest, the purest is the most pitying. And he is so, just because he most condemns the disease, most feels its virulence, most sees its ravages. Your brother man overestimates your power of resistance; he has less sense of sin's horror. To the eye of Divine Love sin has crippled even your power of will; and Divine Love pities you.

Unto whom, then, shall I go but unto Thee! My brother has no place for the leper; he sends him out among the tombs. I thought at first that my chance would lie with my brother. I said, "He is man, he is human, he

has a common frailty; he will remember that I am dust." I have found my mistake, O Lord. I have found that there is no hope but in the highest. My pardon has come from the only quarter which I deemed impossible—the sinless. My hope was in the sinner. I expected great things from the touch of a hand that was soiled and the compassion of a heart that was itself impure. I hoped great things from Simon Peter, who himself had passed through the sea and experienced the strength of the wave. But when Peter came to Antioch, he kept aloof from me; he pretended that he did not see me. The waves of the Sea of Galilee had washed him too clean to be any longer a fit companion for *me*. But *Thou* camest to me, O Lord—Thou of the burning purity, Thou of the spotless spirit! Thou camest to me—when human friend forsook, when earthly comrade crept away! Thou camest—when no man would give me even swine-husks, when my brother denied me the music and the dance! Thou camest with the robe and the welcome—through fire and flood, through storm and stress, through mist and mire, through desert and death! Thou camest to my cloud on the transfiguration mount! All others vanished when they saw my cloud—Moses,

Elias, Peter, James, John; I "saw no man but Jesus only"! Henceforth, in all this mountain, I will build no tabernacle but to Thee!

XXXVIII

GOD'S PROMISE OF THE CLOUD

"The shadow of a great rock in a weary land."—Isa. xxxii. 2.

GOD is commonly represented as a *light* to the soul; here He is represented as a shadow to the soul. This latter experience is one which we do not often think of. We are quite familiar with prayers for the sunshine. We say constantly, "Rise upon our night, Thou better Sun, and let the clouds melt before Thy glory!" But we are not in the habit of saying, "O Thou Divine Cloud, grant us a moment of Thy shadow; come and shade us from the glare and glitter of the garish day!" Such a prayer would be deemed very original, perhaps very unsuitable. And yet there are times in which man needs nothing so much as a withdrawal of lights. There are times in which the only chance for a human soul is the pulling down of the window-blinds.

There is a peculiarity in the law of Divine optics. We pray, "Enlighten our eyes!" but often we can only get our inner eye enlightened by having the outer eye shaded. Is the soul never to get moments for repose —for meditation, self-reflection! Is it never to have an hour all to itself—an hour when its doors are shut, when its windows are covered, when its outside voices are hushed, when it is untouched by the heat of the day! God says, "Yes, it *shall* have such moments"; and He prepares a place for it in the wilderness. He stops me midway in the race. He lays His hand upon me, and I fall. He bears me into the silence, into the solitude. He puts the multitude all out, and locks the door. He closes the shutters of the casement. He interrupts the music in the street; He forbids the dancing in the hall. He says, "Your nerves are weary with excitement; in this desert place you shall rest awhile."

O Lord my God, have I ever thanked Thee for the shadow; have I ever said with the Psalmist, "The Lord is the shade on my right hand, therefore the sun will not smite me by day, neither the moon by night"! Alas, my Father, mine has been the opposite fear; I am afraid of being smitten by the *absence* of

the sun, by the absence of the moon. I have never realised the healing power of the shadow. I have been praying, "Lead, kindly Light!" all the time Thou wert giving the command, "Lead, kindly Shade!" It never occurred to me that there could be an underground railway. I thought myself buried alive, cut off from all work beneath the sun. And lo, my shadow was my substance! When I thought I was losing time, I was travelling with unwonted speed. It was under the shadow I met *Thee*. When I came out men saw a change. They said, "Adversity has humbled him." They were wrong; it had heightened me. I never knew the greatness of my soul till I felt the weakness of my body. On my bed of sickness conscience woke. In my hour of silence Heaven spoke. In my day of darkness Thy light broke. I never knew my immortality till, behind the curtains drawn, I felt my sin. It was the *shadow* taught me immortality. The sunshine said, "The building is complete; why look for a to-morrow!" But the shadow said, "You are unfinished; there is a tower wanting; there is something to come." The sunshine cried, "You are satisfied on earth; earth is your portion." But the shadow murmured, "Your powers are unfilled here; you wait

a wider field." The sunshine sang, "*This* is the day the Lord hath made." But the shadow whispered, "The end is not yet; there *remaineth* a rest to the people of God." Thy shadow, O Lord, has been better than man's light.

XXXIX

THE SELF-INTEREST OF BEING GOOD

"If thou hadst known the things which belong unto thy peace!"—LUKE xix. 42.

"THE things which belong unto thy peace"—is not this rather an inversion of the common idea? I have been accustomed to think of religious duties as things which belong to *God's* peace. I have been in the habit of thinking that religion is my penance, my prostration, my humiliation—that it is my punishment meant to conciliate the Creator and give Him satisfaction. We have come to regard impiety as a refusal to pay tribute—as a thing that will make us richer and God poorer. Our Lord, on the other hand, regards impiety, not as a refusal to *pay* money, but as a refusal to *take* it. He looks upon godlessness as the declining of a favour which has been offered to ourselves and whose acceptance would

greatly increase our store of happiness. I have often been struck with an experience common to pastors and Sunday School teachers. If the parents of the pupil think he has received any slight from pastor or teacher, the child is absent the next Sunday from its habitual place in the class. This would be very amusing if it were not very sad. The idea is that the lesson of the Sunday School is learned as a favour to the *teacher*. It is in reality taught by the teacher as a favour to the child. The things therein contained belong to the *peace* of the child, and are only prescribed by the teacher on that account. The performance of the task is no personal advantage to the teacher. It is only an impersonal advantage—it gratifies his love. So with your Divine Teacher. He prescribes your Sunday lesson because it belongs to your peace. If it brings glory to His name, it is because His name is Love. It is not your homage that gladdens Him; it is your gladness. It is not your tribute He desires; it is your enrichment. It is not your possessions that He wants; it is the peace of your soul.

Lord, I have learned by experience that Calvary belongs to my peace—that I can only find Thy joy through bearing Thy yoke. All through my life Thou hast been teaching me that my hour of personal happiness is my hour

of self-forgetfulness. In the world of outward sense I find the star when I *look* for it. But in the world of my soul it is all the reverse; I only find the star I love when I am seeking for another star. I am oftener disappointed *by* my expectation than *in* my expectation. When my heart has been bent upon an object, when I have thought of it by day and dreamed of it by night, its coming has not seldom failed to bring the promised joy. Why so, my Lord? Because it belongs to my peace that I should be self-forgetting. It is my telescope that has spoiled me. I have been pointing to my own star. I have been nursing the thought of my coming pleasure. I have been looking through the glass at my approaching happiness. I have forgotten that the very word "happiness" means "that which comes by chance—comes when we seek not for it." Remove my telescope, O Lord! my telescope belongs not to my peace. Give me a daily lesson in unselfishness! Teach me that the flowers of life come in at the side door when I am at the front door! When I am distressed about my burden, let me hear the cry of another distressed about *his* burden! Tell me to leave mine a moment in the street till I have run and lifted his! And I know that when I come back to get my own I shall meet a great surprise; my burden will not be there; it will have vanished

from the way. In its place there will lie a rose —the Rose of Sharon, the Flower of Eternal Hope; for I shall have found in the hour of sacrifice the thing which belongs unto my peace.

XL

HOW HEREDITY AFFECTS SALVATION

"I will cleanse their blood."—Joel iii. 21.

"CAN religion do that!" you say. "Can it cleanse sins of the blood! I always knew it could cleanse sins of a certain order—sins of example, sins of upbringing, sins of worldly circumstance; but sins of the blood!—I thought that was something beyond it." No, it is not. You need not, unless you will, be a victim of heredity. You say, "I carry in my bosom the vices of my ancestors." No, my brother, you do not. You bring only one vice from your ancestors—a weak will, and with that you make all your vices. What do you mean by the transmission of wickedness? What is that which passes from father to son on the stream of heredity? Is it drunkenness, lasciviousness, temper, extravagance, meanness? Not one of these. No child brings a temptation with it into the world. The child of drunken parents before it has tasted

alcohol has no more tendency to drink than you have. What it does bring into the world is a weak will. That is the only moral possession transmitted by corrupt blood. God says: "The transmission must *be*, but it can be remedied right well. You say you have received from your father a will that cannot withstand temptation. Come, then, and I will give you a temptation which you *ought* not to withstand—the temptation to a great love, a Divine love. You say you have got by heredity an inability to resist surrender. I will make that hereditary weakness your glory. Surrender to *Me!* Give up your will to *My* tempting! Yield to the solicitations, to the allurements, of *My* Spirit! Abandon yourself to the prospect of 'pleasures for evermore'—of a house with many mansions and a city with streets of gold and a river of crystal clearness and a tree of fruits perennial! Then shall your very defects become your salvation. Not in spite of, but through, your transmitted weakness you shall enter the kingdom of heaven. It will be worth while to have received from your ancestors an unresisting will if thereby you have been able to surrender yourself to *Me*. It will be worth while to have been halt and maimed if thereby you have been overtaken by *My* chariots. It will be worth while to have been wounded in the wing if

thereby you have been captured as a prisoner of the Lord."

Lord, it is through my very nothingness I hope to be cleansed. It is through that very weakness of will which I have derived from my earthly fathers that I hope to be drawn to my heavenly Father. The stream of heredity has taken away my power of resistance; but so shall I the sooner be conquered by *Thee.* It is the old heredity that has prepared me for a new heredity. For, when I come to Thee I shall get new blood in my veins—the blood of Jesus Christ Thy Son. When I come to Thee the old defect shall be cleansed. My weakness of will shall vanish when my will is Thine. I shall be brought to Thee on a bed; but when I see Thee I shall take up my bed and walk. I shall come in as a captive, but I shall go out as a soldier. I shall enter wearing a chain, but I shall emerge bearing a banner. The blood of Christ Thy Son will be to me a new heredity—a birth from my Father. I will hang my harp no more on the willows by the streams of Babel. There will be a second stream—the blood of a new ancestry—the stream that maketh glad the city of my God. *There* shall I tune my harp in the sweet by and by. The impurity of the old stream may indeed prepare my way; but the blood of Jesus Christ Thy Son cleanseth from all sin.

XLI

THE FOUNDATION OF THE ALTAR

"I beseech you by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice."—Rom. xii. 1.

IT is not often that the idea of sacrifice is associated with the thought of *mercy*. We commonly view it as one of the obstacles to our belief in God's mercy. In all religions that I know of, with one exception, men sacrifice to God at times when they think His mercy turned away; they sacrifice to avert His anger, to restore His smile. But there is one religion which inverts the order—the religion of Christ. All other faiths say, "Sacrifice that ye may win God's favour"; Christianity says, "Win God's favour that ye may sacrifice." All other faiths make sacrifice the root; Christianity makes sacrifice the flower. All other faiths cry, "Bring your offering that you may be purified"; Christianity exclaims, "Be pure that you may bring your offering." With other faiths it is those

who are afar off that sacrifice; in Christ it is those who are near. The Gospel offering is the offering by the purest—a soul without blemish and without spot. That is the reason why Paul says, "I beseech you by the *mercies* of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice." It is the sons of purity that he calls to suffer pain. It is to the souls captivated by love that he appeals for an exercise of self-denial. "Ye," he says, "who have yourselves been made white, ye who have received the mercy of your God, ye who by Divine grace have already reached the inner shrine of the sanctuary, I appeal to *you* to bear the burdens of humanity. I ask not those in the outer court. I ask not those who are one with the degraded multitude. I ask not those who are partners in the same sin as that of their guilty brother, and who, therefore, might be expected to bear his infirmities. I ask the white-robed. I appeal to the spotless. I call upon the pure in heart who see God. I cry, 'If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are *spiritual*, restore!' I beseech you by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice."

I thank thee, O my Father, that Thou hast made sacrifice a Divine thing. It was once the mark of a slave; but Thou hast glorified it. It was once the mark of a sinner; but

Thou hast exalted it. It was once the mark of a victim; but Thou hast enfranchised it. It is always in *Thy* garden that the sensitive plant is found. In Thy presence is fulness of joy; therefore it is that Thy presence makes us more sensitive to pain. It is they who have been gladdened by the streams of *Thy* city that are most apt to be saddened by the streams of other cities. It is from Thy sunbeams, O my God, that I learn the shadows of my brother man. I understand why it is that Paul summons to Thine *altar* the men whom Thou hast blessed. It is the sons of Thy kingdom alone that are poor in spirit. My pity is born of my privileges. Is it not written of Thy Son Christ Jesus that because He was in Thy form He emptied Himself into a servant's form? It was His *height* that made His heaviness, His Crown that made His Cross. Even so, my Father, let it be with me! May every personal crown suggest a brother's cross! May the bread which I break remind me of the hungry! May the robe which I wear remind me of the tattered! May the house which I inhabit remind me of the homeless! May the friends whom I prize remind me of the solitary! May the books which I read remind me of the ignorant! May the fires which I light remind me of the shivering! May the helps by which

I travel remind me of the footsore and weary! So shall Thy mercies be the ground of my sacrifice; I shall present my body for my brother's burden when I have realised my own light.

XLII

THE UNIQUE ELEMENT IN CHRIST'S GOSPEL

"When Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with Him, then he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy seat."—NUM. vii. 89.

IT is only when we go into the tabernacle to speak with *God* that we find a mercy seat. When we go to speak with man we find only a judgment seat. Even the apostles have not waited for the twelve thrones Christ has promised them. They have set up little thrones on their own account—have sentenced Samaria to fire and a Roman soldier to mutilation. Nor, if we go into the temple of Nature, shall we find exactly a seat of mercy. We shall find a seat of medicine—an instrumentality for effecting repairs. It is proverbial in the medical world to speak of leaving things to Nature. And Nature does indeed tend to bind up her own wounds, to heal the bones that have been

broken. Yet this is not quite a mercy seat. Nature says, "I will heal thee, and then I shall love thee." It is something far above indifference; but is it yet Divine? No, because it does not yet meet the full need of the *human*. I want to be loved *un*healed—loved in my rags, loved in my destitution. He who sits upon a mercy seat must summon before him not a white-robed multitude, but a company clothed in sackcloth. Am I to wait for the music and the dancing ere I can say, "I will arise and go to my Father"! If Nature be my Father, it would seem so. But I hear the voice of a deeper paternity—"Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and I will give you rest." It bids me wait for no music, wait for no dancing, wait neither for ring nor robe. It bids me come in my hunger, in my sickness, in my squalor. It cries, "Tarry not till you are better! Delay not till you have put on your fairest robe! Linger not till you have found an attire fit for presentation to the King of kings! Come *now*—just as you are—without one plea—with the grave-clothes hanging round you!" This is counted one of the platitudes of evangelicalism. It is in truth the most unique experience which the present world reveals—the unfolding of a mercy seat. No such invitation is given by Nature; no such invitation is given by man; no such invitation

is given by the creeds of man. One alone has proclaimed that startling paradox. One alone has dared to say a thing so original, so new. It is He who spoke as never man spake.

Jesus, Thou hast brought a new thing out of Thy treasure—a gem never seen before. The wise men of the East have shown us many precious things—gold and frankincense and myrrh and the light of ancient stars. But amid all their bright things there was one jewel wanting, one star absent from the sky; there was no mercy seat. They brought pearls to the purified, hopes to the healed, robes to the reformed; but they had nothing for the leper, nothing for the dying, nothing for the unregenerate. Thou alone hast brought that treasure, O my Lord. Thou alone hast a ring for the uncleansed hand, sandals for the unwashed feet, raiment for the ungainly form. Thou alone hast an invitation for the highways and the hedges. Others have bidden those from whom they can receive; Thou hast called the destitute. Others have bidden those who have the promise and potency of *life;* Thou hast called the dead. Others have bidden those who have seen the King in His beauty; Thou hast called the blind. Others have bidden those who have heard the music; Thou hast called the deaf. Others have bidden

those who run towards the prize; Thou hast called the lame. Others have bidden those who bear the fruits of repentance; Thou hast called sinners unto Thee. Only in *Thy* tabernacle shall I find the mercy seat.

XLIII

THE GLORIFYING OF MEMORY

"The angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them."—Exod. xiv. 19.

THERE are times in this life when the angel who went before us walks behind us. I would call these the times of retrospect. The angel of our life is usually in advance of us; it is commonly an angel of hope. Most of us live by the light of the future. Youth looks forward to a coming glory of the *earth;* age looks forward to a coming glory in the heavens. But I think there is a period *between* youth and age when the angel of hope gives place to the angel of memory. I allude to that little strip of ground called middle life. It is neither the morning nor the evening; and therefore it neither lives in the prospect of to-day nor in the prospect of to-morrow. And being unable to look forward, it looks back. The angel goes behind us. Middle age lives more on its memo-

ries than on its prospects. Yet I would not call it on that account a barren age. Is memory to be the only power of the soul which is to have no angel—no symbol of immortality! We speak of immortal hope, of abiding faith, of deathless love. We speak of undying aspiration, of quenchless longing, of indomitable will. Is memory to be the only thing without a symbol of the endless! I have seen the resurrection angel pointing on to the future—walking in advance of the march of man; but is he never to walk behind! Am I always to be told of the great powers which are *coming*—of the added senses, and the quickened wings of thought! Is there nothing to be done "lest we forget"! Is there to be no provision for memory! We may be planted to-morrow in fairer fields; but our deepest joy in a field comes not from its fairness—it comes from its memories. We may be led to-morrow into pastures new; but our deepest joy in pastures is not their novelty—it is their power to recall. We may be greeted to-morrow by songs unheard before; but our deepest joy in a song is not its freshness—it is its oldness, its ability to wake the past. Oh! there may be beautiful angels in front of us—angels with shining robes, angels with glittering plumes! But if there is no angel behind us—no power that can recall

the memories of our native shore, we are disposed to cry, "Carry us not up hence!"

I thank Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast placed an angel behind me—hast glorified the things of memory. I thank Thee that the resurrection angel sits upon the stone where sleeps my buried past, and gives me promise that it will rise again. I do not want to part with my old garments—mean though they be, threadbare as they are. I would have the clothes of my dead past bound carefully in a napkin and laid in a sacred spot. I would not have the moth and rust of time corrupt them; I would not have forgetfulness steal them away. I would not even lose the print of the nails that tore them. I should like, my Father, to ask Thee for an explanation of my pain. They tell me it will be all forgotten—the tears wiped from my eyes. That is only the promise that there will be an angel in *front* of me. But I want an angel behind me. I do not wish a child's forgetfulness, but a man's remembrance. I am not so eager that the tears should be wiped as that the tears should be vindicated. It is easy to *expunge*—the angel in front can do that; but to explain—that needs an angel at the back of me. Send into my past not a cloud but a sunshine—not an oblivion but a glory! The pledge of my vindicated yesterday is the angel that walks behind.

XLIV

THE GROUND OF DIVINE COMPASSION

"Should not I spare Nineveh, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand?"—JONAH iv. 11.

THE beings here spoken of are the *infants* of Nineveh—the lives which had not reached the age of conscious discernment. It is a wonderful passage. Some old Calvinistic divines used to say that the salvation of a child depended on the faith of the parent. If they had only looked into the Book of Jonah, they would have seen that God had there set forth a refutation of their theory. Here the parents are all bad—to a man, to a woman. They are idolaters in doctrine, they are wicked in life; they have no circumcision, no baptism, no Holy Communion. And yet these little children of godless parents are so dear to the heart of the All-Father that He cannot destroy the city which they inhabit. "Cannot" is the appropriate word. There is a magnificent limit

to the omnipotence of God—the limit imposed by His love. His power cannot pass the boundaries of His heart. All the voices of the universe called for the death of Nineveh—all but one. Law called for it; prudence called for it; morality called for it; political economy called for it; the survival of the fittest called for it. But there was one thing which cried against it—God's compassion for the infants. It was a solitary voice—a voice crying in the wilderness. It was unsupported by the voice of policy, the voice of worldly prudence, the voice of public opinion. It gave no cause for its cry. It did not say, "These infants may be good *some* day, great some day, believers some day." It was the wilderness that *made* the cry; it was sheer pity for the helpless that opened the arms of God.

My soul, hast thou considered this, that in the heart of thy Father there is such a thing as compassion for its *own* sake! There is nothing I am so apt to forget. I am always seeking a reason for God's pity *beyond* my pain. I have cried, with the men of old, "For Thy servant *David's* sake." Why look so far, O my soul! Why not take thy place with the infants of Nineveh, with the infants in the arms of Jesus! Wilt thou not learn that alike in God and man compassion is its own argument! How

shalt thou plead for these infants of Nineveh? Shalt thou say, "Remember Thy covenant with David"? But they are not of the *seed* of David. Shalt thou say, "For the sake of their father Abraham"? But they are not of the *stock* of Abraham. Shalt thou say, "In remembrance of their pious ancestry"? But their ancestry is impious, and their fathers *deserve* to die. Look not so far in thy pleading, O my soul! The heart of thy God moves not on borrowed wings. The pinions of its pity are not attached from without; they grow from within. They are independent of David or Abraham or Moses; they are moved only by the creature's pain. Point not beyond the swaddling bands! Point not beyond the manger! Point not beyond the helpless cry! All the guilt of Nineveh cannot reach the height of *these* arguments. The infants of Nineveh are outside the pale. Israel knows them not; the Church owns them not; ordinances sanctify them not; respectability needs them not. But in the heart of the Father their cry outweighs all. They prevail by their poverty; they win by their wailing; they rule by their rags; they dominate by their destitution; they triumph by their troubles; they conquer the heart of God by a cry from the heart of man. When thou prayest to thy Father thou needest only thy *need*.

XLV

THE CLIMAX OF RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

"The Lord is slow to anger, and will not at all acquit the wicked."—NAHUM i. 3.

IS not this a contradiction? No; I understand the prophet to mean that there are more complete modes of rooting out evil than the destruction of the evildoer. As a matter of fact, violent passion does not remedy wrong. It sometimes exhausts itself; it sometimes oversteps the mark and creates sympathy with the wrong side. I take Nahum to mean that the best way to root out evil is to make it work the ends of mercy. What is the greatest judgment on sin? Is it the annihilation of the sinner? That leaves the act untouched; it simply adds a new catastrophe. Is it the destruction of the sinner's *work?* That merely enables one to begin again: it does not remedy the loss of time. But imagine that you could convert the barrier into a gate. Imagine that you could make the

opposing wall the first wall of your own city. Imagine that, instead of demolishing the crosses raised by your Pilates and your Herods, you could make these crosses the stepping-stones of Christ's glory. Would not Nahum's view here be vindicated! Would not sin be destroyed by the very mercy of God—the slowness of His anger! It would be a stronger judgment on sin than the thunderbolt or the earthquake or the pestilence. It would be a turning of sin's weapons against itself, a rooting-out of the disease by its own germ, a transformation of the lake of fire into the river of life eternal.

Lord, I have often marvelled at the slowness of Thine anger. I have seen the enemy sow tares in Thy field. I have looked for the floods to blight it, and they have not fallen. I have expected the winds to blast it, and they have not risen. I have called on disease to smite it, and it has not come. And I have said, "Surely Thou art *indifferent* to good and evil; Thou smilest alike on both!" Then I have seen a strange thing. The tares which I wanted Thy servants to pluck out have sprung up to view, not as tares, but as wheat. The bad seed which the enemy sowed has risen in fruit and flower and foliage, and drawn the wondering eyes. The blood of the martyrs has become the seed of the Church; the desert has been crowded; the

wilderness has sung. In that hour I knew that I was wrong, that the prophet was right. I saw the world's sin condemned by the very slowness of Thine anger, by the very patience of Thy waiting. If the servants had plucked up the tares it would have been a poor judgment; others could have sown new tares to-morrow. But when the tares themselves burst into flower, there was no *chance* for evil. The enemy made a cross for Thee, O Lord—a cross that was to crucify Thy glory. The servants cried, "Pull it down; break it in pieces like a potter's vessel!" But *Thou* saidst, "Let it stand until the harvest!" And lo! in the autumn field it is the fairest of all the flowers, the sweetest of all the fruits, the greenest of all the leaves! Was there ever judgment on sin like that! Where are the tares gone? They were not plucked, yet they are not here; whither have they vanished? They are all in the garden of Thy grace. The thorn has become a fir-tree and the briar a myrtle-tree and the bramble a Christmas-tree. The withered are waving; the barren are budding; the seedless are springing; the fruitless are flourishing. That which came to quell has quickened; that which came to smite has smiled; that which came to blast has blessed; that which came to burn has beautified. Thou hast conquered sin by the slowness of Thine anger.

XLVI

A NEW ROAD TO AN OLD MORALITY

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."—MATT. v. 17.

"Ye are become dead to the law."—ROM. vii. 4.

IS there not a great contradiction here? Christ says He has come to fulfil the law; Paul tells his fellow-Christians that they ought to become dead to it! Is there any reconciling of such statements as these? Yes; they are susceptible of a perfect, a glorious harmony. For consider, no law is ever fulfilled until we are dead to it. Of course, there are two opposite ways in which a man may become dead to a law. A habitual criminal may become so hardened as to lose all fear of punishment—even of death itself. This is one way, and he who treads it is a practised law-breaker. But there is another and a contrary road to emancipation from the sense of law. Suppose that the same criminal should suddenly be touched by one pure

affection. I do not mean a sensuous love, but the love for something which is white and innocent. Suppose a little child of his own lays hold of the tendrils of his heart and keeps him in a prison where he never dwelt before. Suppose that this little child should become to him the representative of all childhood, and that his own love for it should become the representative of all parenthood. Suppose that through this common sympathy he should come habitually to put himself in the place of all distressed children and all afflicted fathers and mothers. Do you not see what the effect of this would be? He would still be as dead to the law as ever, but no longer for the old reason. Yesterday he was regardless of law through want of feeling; to-day he is regardless through feeling. Yesterday the command had no force because he was hardened; to-day the command has no force because he is softened. Yesterday the policeman was useless because he feared him not; to-day the policeman is useless because he needs him not. The policeman is not a motive to him—if he were taken off the beat it would make no difference. He can fulfil the law by love. He has received a more imperative mandate than any prohibitory notice or any judicial bill could furnish. But it is a mandate from within—the magistracy of the heart. He keeps the law because he is dead

to it. Wings have made his feet unnecessary. He can traverse the old road by a new vehicle. He can put out the candle when he has seen the sun.

Lord, Thou hast for every striving soul a time when death and hell are "cast into the lake of fire." Hasten that time for me, O my Father! I should like death and hell to be dead to me—dead, as a motive—dead, as a deterrent. I should like all law to be dead to me. I would not fear my own penalty, but my brother's pain. I would not dread my personal incarceration, but my victim's cry. I would not be deterred by fetters, but by feelings. I would not tremble before the doors of the gaol, but before the demands of my own justice. If I see a starving child, let me not say, "I must feed the poor, for those who gave no meat departed into everlasting fire." Nay, my Father, rather at such seasons would I pray, "Let not my fire of love depart from within me!" Make the hell which I fear unholiness, the chain which I dread uncharity, the fire which I loathe unfeelingness! Teach me that there is no penalty like the penalty of Dives!—to have a great gulf between myself and any suppliant at my gates. May *this* be the flame I flee from, may this be the worm I beware of! Send the waters of *sympathy* to cool my thirst! Put a bridge of *love* over the

gulf of selfishness! Create within me the sense of a brother's want, yea, of an enemy's want! Let his wounds make me sore; let his griefs make me sad; let his trials make me heavy; let his tears make me weep! Then shall I fulfil the law to whose motives I am dead.

XLVII

THE CALL NOT TO GO

"He that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends."—MARK v. 18, 19.

THIS is a remarkable refusal of prayer. If ever prayer was uttered to which a favourable answer might have been predicted it would seem to have been this. A man who had been redeemed from his iniquity asks leave to dwell in the special presence of Jesus—in other words, to devote himself exclusively to a religious mission; he is told to go home to his friends. His friends doubtless thought that he had shown great piety in his desire to get away from them. It must have been an extreme surprise to them when Christ sent him back. I can imagine them saying, "How could the Lord have rejected the services of one who desired to be a missionary of His truth!" But did He reject his services? No; if we think that, we have missed the point altogether. The man was

under a false impression. He thought that the only way of serving Jesus was in the work of the sanctuary. Jesus told him this was a mistake. He told him that a man, that a woman, might be a missionary by the fireside. He told him that the duties of the domestic altar were as dear to the heart of God as the preaching of the Gospel or the writing of Christian tracts. He sent him home to his friends, not because he was unfit for His service, but because he was specially fit for a particular branch of His service—the family circle. I think the Gospel would have lost something without this incident. We hear a great deal about the call to leave the home and follow Jesus; is it not well that there should at least be one call of a contrary kind—the solicitation to quit the immediate presence of Jesus and pursue the duties of the home?

My brother, my sister, I have heard thee bemoaning thy want of a mission. I have heard thee many times complaining that the duties of home forbid thee to consecrate thyself to God. I have heard thee pray for a corner in God's vineyard—for a place among evangelists, for a message to the heathen, for a district of visitation among the sick; and I have seen thee fret because no door was opened. Did it never strike thee that the shut door was itself an answer to

thy prayer. Did it never strike thee that thou art the very one who asked to abide with Jesus on the sea and to whom Jesus said, "Go home to thy friends." There are those who are called to do outdoor work; but there are those also who are called *not* to do outdoor work. Why not claim thy prohibition as itself a call from God. Art thou confined to the family circle—tied by the duties of the household, forced to abide at home. Does that make you less a missionary than Paul was? Not so, my brother. God sent Paul out; but He sends thee in. The men on the sea with Jesus had a glorious mission, but not more glorious than that of the healed demoniac whom Jesus sent home. Has the Lord refused to thee the request He granted to Livingstone—the permission to go out and convert the nations. Be it so; but remember, the refusal is as special a call to thee as the permission was to Livingstone. Go home to thy friends! God cries to thee. Consecrate each family tie! Light heaven on the hearth! Plant Nazareth in the nursery! Sow peace in the parlour! Shed kindness in the kitchen! Spread Bethany at the board! Fill with pure literature the library! Be hospitable to the stranger in the hall! Then shalt thou know that it was a *mission* call which said to thee, "Go home to thy friends.

XLVIII

REVELATION IN COMMON LIFE

"I went up by revelation."—Gal. ii., 2.

PAUL means to say that his going up to Jerusalem was providential. Man sent him for one purpose; God had in view another. He came up just at the right time. He did not know it was the right time. God led him by a human motive—a secular motive. Paul thought he was only carrying a private subscription. He never dreamed that he was coming into the very heart of a great church-council; if he had, I do not think he would have come. He was very anxious to be deemed independent of his Jerusalem brethren, and would naturally have shrunk from meeting them. Therefore God drew him by a secular motive, a financial motive. He tempted him up by circumstances —by commonplace circumstances. Though he did not at the time know it, these circumstances were really a Divine revelation. He came after-

wards to *see* that they were so—that they had been his messengers crying, "Come"; in looking back he is not afraid to say, "I went up by revelation."

Even so, my soul, has it often been with thee. Often hast thou gone up to thy Jerusalem for what seemed a trifle. Thou hast gone up grudgingly, unwillingly. There has come an invitation from a friend which it has not been thought kind to refuse, yet whose acceptance has seemed a waste of time. And so thou hast gone, almost against the wishes of thy heart. And that unwilling visit has been the tide of thy fortune—the wave that has wafted thee into prosperity. There, in the streets of that Jerusalem, thou hast met thy destiny. While bent on other business, while intent on other aims, thy fate has found thee. And ever since, that trifling cause which drew thee to Jerusalem has been hailed as the voice of God. In looking forward, thy saying was, "I am going up by invitation"; but in looking back, thy words will ever be, "I went up by revelation." Saul's father sent him on an errand one day; on the road he received a kingdom; and ever afterwards he knew that the errand had been God's errand. And henceforth to thee, my soul, there will be nothing common or unclean; all seeming trifles will be possible revelations. Thou wilt uncover

thy head before the commonplace; thou wilt bow reverently in the presence of the passing hour. Every village will be a possible Bethlehem; every feast will be a possible Bethany; every pool will be a possible Bethesda. Walk solemnly on the dusty road to Emmaus; who knows but that the stranger to whom thou talkest may be thy life's revealer! Tread softly the way through despised Samaria; who knows but that the *Lord* is resting on the well! Move seriously through the prosaic duties of Nazareth; who knows but at thy side the Christ may be working too! The doors that to-day seem to open only into the street may be found to-morrow to have opened into Paradise. On all of them your inscription yet may be, "I went up by revelation."

XLIX

THE HOUR OF DIVINE INERTNESS

"He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow."
—Mark iv. 38.

I HAVE often asked myself, What is the most disturbing theological aspect of the sea of life? Most people will answer, "It is its moments of Divine judgment." That is not my opinion. It may be a solemn thing to me, as it was to Luther, when God seems directly to intervene by a manifestation of displeasure. But that has its comfort as well as its solemnity. It is something to feel that I am in the hand of God, even though the pressure of His hand is heavy on me. But I think the most shadowy moment of my life is when I do *not* feel the pressure of the hand of God—when I am unconscious of His touch either as light or heavy. The hour when I am most stricken is the hour when my God seems to be asleep. And to a spiritual

mind it matters very little whether God seems to sleep in a calm or in a storm. To the disciples in that ship the dreadful thing was the seeming indifference in the *storm;* but the disciples were not yet spiritual minds—they were only afraid for their lives. What the spiritual mind fears is not a loss of the ship but a losing sight of God. I think that in point of fact we oftener cry for God on the *becalmed* sea than on the stormy sea. Examine your doubting moments—the times when you dread, not a God of judgment, but a God of indifference. What are these moments? Are they mainly the times of shaking, the times of war, the times of national upheaving? No; they are chiefly the days of peace. It is when the sun rises indiscriminately, when good harvests come to bad people, when no commercial crash follows illegitimate trade, when loose life is accepted as the fashion, when oppression is tolerated, when extravagance is condoned, when the sea of danger is sailed without shipwreck and the rock is struck without damage to the crew—it is *then* that I feel the Christ to be asleep. It is the dead calm that startles me. I long for a roll of thunder. I long for a flash of lightning. I long for a gust of the Lord's passion. I should hail the voice of judgment as a joy.

Why sleepest Thou, O Christ? It is that I

may wake Thee. Thy sleep is for *my* refreshing, not Thine. If I saw Thee ever on the deck, I should never feel my need of Thee. I have only learned my need of Thee from the moments of Thy seeming repose. It is well that betimes a father's care should appear to slumber; it gives margin to the child's freedom. Thou art not eager, O my Father, to beset me all round with Thy presence. Why shouldst Thou be! Thou wouldst have me *willing* in the day of Thy power. It is not obedience Thou desirest; it is longing. How shall I long for Thee unless I have moments of thirst—moments when the water is not there! If I dwell for ever in Thy beauty, I shall never know Thy beauty; I must have hours of eclipse to know it. "Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself!" cries the prophet. Why not! Thy hiding is Thy revealing. I never knew I loved Thee till the day I missed Thee on the deck. I never felt how dear Thy presence was till the cloud received Thee out of my sight. I never panted for the touch of Thy waking hand till men around me said, "He is asleep." That sleep of Thine has been the charm of all my voyage. Thy silence told me of my love. I learned the secret when I missed Thee. Thy sleep was my heart's waking. The cloud that hid Thy face cleared my soul. The darkness rent in twain the veil of my temple. I

heard the music of Thy voice in the hour in which it did not come. I bless Thee, O Lord, that there was silence in heaven for "the space of half an hour.

L

THE DESIGN OF CHRISTIAN SACRIFICE

"When the burnt-offering began, the song of the Lord began also."—2 CHRON. xxix. 27.

IT is not often that a sense of joy co-exists with a sense of pain. The soldier frequently hears music on his march to battle and feels himself inspired by the sound. Yet I would not call this a co-existence of joy with the horrors of war. For, what the music really does is to divert the mind from that horror. It does not blot out the terrors of the battlefield; it rather fixes the eye, as if by an act of hypnotism, upon something outside the field. But in the passage before us there is symbolised a peculiar experience. A sacrifice and a joy run together contemporaneously, "When the burnt-offering began, the song of the Lord began." There is only one sphere in which pain weds joy —the sphere of the Lord's song. The song of the Lord is always heard at the sacrificial

moment, the moment when self is crucified. Do not imagine I am speaking of church services. God's altars are not limited to churches. That the joy comes with the burnt-offering is as true of the market-place as of the mission-field, of the social hour as of the sacrament. How many joys are lost to me for want of the altar of self-sacrifice! How often do I miss the beauties of a book because I am jealous of the writer! How often do I lose the pleasure of a song because I am thinking of my receipt of custom! How often does the murmur of my heart drown the murmur of the stream! My burden arrests the brook; my heaviness obscures the hill; my tremor strips the trees; my worry bares the woods; my nervous flutter withers the flowers. Can anything restore the music and the dancing, can anything give back to these objects their native joy? Yes—the altar of self-sacrifice; the song will begin where the offering begins. It is not freedom from the world I need; it is freedom from myself. The world is as defrauded as God is, by the absence of an altar in my soul. The creation groaneth and travaileth because its beauties are unappreciated; my care will not let them enter my heart. I must sacrifice if I would sing. I must bury myself if I would bloom. I must forget my fortunes if I would flower. I must

smite self-love if I would smile. I must lose my life if I would learn full joy.

Lord, I come to Thine altar not as other faiths come to their altar. All other masters tell me to come that I may *immolate* myself; Thou biddest me come that I may replenish myself. As long as I do not come I am immolated already—robbed of half my joy. The pleasures of the world are unappropriated till I surrender my soul. My discontent sees not the daisy; my care beholds not the cowslip; my sullenness marks not the sunbeam. Envy dims my eye to human loveliness. Sordidness kills my sympathy with the festive hour. Pride stills my pulses to earthly brotherhood. I come to Thine altar not to lose but to get back my world. That moment of sacrifice which makes the Buddhist poor, makes me rich. Not to unrobe myself do I pour out my libation. Not to bury the sights and sounds of earth do I seek Thine altar. I seek it to see them better, to hear them better. I seek it because without it I have been secluded from my world —Thy world. I seek it that I may be less a hermit, less a monk, less a recluse. I seek it that I may be more fit for the work of life—for the meeting with the busy crowd, for the conflict in the field of commerce, for the duties of the day and hour, for the vicissitudes of

the dance and the drawing-room, for the pleasures of the gay and the sorrows of the sad, for the moments of my victory and the scenes of my defeat. For all these things what I need is a song in the heart; and the song in the heart will begin when I have offered up my soul.

LI

THE QUALIFICATION CONFERRED BY SUFFERING

"The Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever."—Exod. xix. 9.

WHEN a public man falls into adversity it is deemed a specially sad thing. That *any* life should be overclouded with grief is to the spectator a source of pain. But that one whose province it is to speak to the people should be so overclouded, that one should be thus hampered whose services to mankind are in constant request—this seems a positive waste. We are disposed to say, "If God wishes this man to speak to the people and to be a source of faith to the people, why does He let him be overclouded, why does He not leave his energies unimpaired for the great work he has to do?" The passage before us answers that question. It says that for such a man an ex-

perience of the thick cloud is itself a source of power. We see one of the most public men that ever lived made to pass through a thick cloud. We are told that this thick cloud, so far from being a hiding of God, was the very coming of God to his soul. We are informed that the object of the cloud was to give him greater eloquence as a speaker, greater force as a teacher, greater influence as a leader. And is it not ever so. No man can impress his religion upon his brother unless he himself has met God in the cloud. If he would command the belief of his fellow-men it is not enough that he should have *seen* God; he must have seen Him in the storm. Has he lived all the day in a garden. Has he dwelt amid perennial fruits and flowers. Has he basked in perpetual sunshine—beneath skies that never lower and amid faces that never frown. Then, his faith is a very natural thing, but it is in no sense an evidential thing; it is the faith of a child. What the world wants to see is a faith that can hold by a God who walks upon the waves —a faith that has not been sunk in the surgings nor broken by the breezes. It finds in such a faith what one finds in a commercial bank which has borne unhurt the strain of a financial crisis. Our trust is in proportion to the thickness of the cloud through which the bank was

floated; we lean most heavily on the battered spar.

My soul, despise not the moments of thy clouding! Think not they are waste moments —moments that have withdrawn thee from the stream of life! They will bring thee nearer to the stream than ever thou wouldst have been without them. They are at present a solitude; they have called thee into a desert place apart from the crowd. But hast thou never read how the crowd came to the man in the desert—to John in the wilderness. Why did they come to *him*—the man clothed in camel's hair, the reed broken by the wind, the feeder on locusts and wild honey? It was because they felt that when such a man speaks of God he is worth hearing. They felt that, when a battered soul claims to see an opened heaven and a descending dove of peace, there must be something to be *said* for God, something of which the world knows not. It was because he preached "in the wilderness" that men came. They came to see the marvel of a faith that could live on so poor a fare, sing to so bad an accompaniment, smile in so mean a garb, soar on so feeble a wing. So, my soul, shall it be with thee. Thy desert shall be thy metropolis. Men shall throng thee because of thy carol in the cloud. The sad shall listen to thy night-

song. The heart-sore shall hear thine evening hymn. The restless shall run to thy rainbow. They shall point to the light in the valley. They shall gaze at the diamond in the dust. They shall view the high rock amid the waves. They shall mark the star in the darkness. They shall hail the dove in the deluge. They shall hear the music on the waters. They shall be glad that a still small voice can be heard amid the thunder and the earthquake. Magnify thy cloud, O my soul!

LII

THE LIVES WITHOUT RECORD

"Thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi. The Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony."—Num. i. 49, 53.

"THOU shalt not number the tribe of Levi." Here was apparently a neglected set of men—a class overlooked in the enrolment of the people. They were to be uncounted, discounted. A spectator would have said they were a specimen of those unfit for survival. In all the work of the nation they had neither part nor lot. We read, in the parable, of the Levite passing by on the other side; but here the Levite seems to be *passed* by. He is left behind by the stream of the world's activities; and, with the prophet, the beholder is disposed to say that his way is hid from the Lord and his judgment overlooked by his God. And yet the beholder would be wrong. These men have not been overlooked, have not been shunted

from the race of life. If they are left behind by the stream it is because there is a special duty to do which can only be done by those who are left behind. That special duty is to wait and watch. The Levites are to "keep charge of the tabernacle"—to see that no harm comes to the ark and what it contains. It seems a poor service when contrasted with the work of the numbered. In reality it was the greatest service of all. If anything had befallen the tabernacle, Israel would have collapsed immediately. The loss of ten thousand of her soldiers would have been nothing to the putting-out of her altar fire; the one might have weakened her strength, but the other would have killed her hope. These humble watchers and guardians of the altar fire were not on the communion roll; but they were doing service without which the roll would have been dismembered. They did not build the houses nor fight the battles nor plant the vineyards; but they watched over the safety of that for whose sake all houses were built, all battles fought, all vineyards planted—the inner shrine of the sanctuary—the consecration of the hearth and home.

Thou who art unnumbered among the people, thou to whom there has been assigned no active work, there is a message here for thee. There

is a service for the unnumbered—for those who only stand and wait. There are Levites as well as priests in the temple of thy Father. There are those who have been laid aside from active duty—who have no district to visit in, no church to preach in, no mission to serve in. Through sickness, through poverty, through the requirement to attend on others, they have been retained indoors—their names are not enrolled. Weep not that thou art among these! Lament not that thy life has been lived behind the scenes! It is behind the scenes that all great things are born. There is no influence like that which lights the domestic fire. I know something better than to be numbered among the people; it is to fit men for being numbered. That work may be thine. Where are men made fit for being numbered? Is it not just by the household fire, around the family altar. Within that sphere the most broken human life is often the most powerful educator. Many a patient sufferer has trained her son to be a soldier—trained him by the very sight of her patience. Many a fireside existence has taught the belief in immortality—taught it by the mere spectacle of moral beauty. Jacob has gained more by his night vigil than by his merchandise. His deeds in the exchange never touched the *world;* but the world has been wakened by his vision

on the couch of clay. He has bloomed in his brokenness; he has conquered in his concealment; he has flourished in his frailty; he has soared in his silence; he has reigned in his repose; he has prevailed in his prostration; he has found his ladder in a lowly place. Despise not, my soul, the days that have no record!

LIII

THE BASIS OF ANSWER TO PRAYER

"From the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, thy words were heard."—DAN. x. 12.

THE thought seems to me a very remarkable one. It is the averment that the communion between God and man requires a railroad. "From the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, thy words were heard." What has God's hearing to do with my understanding? Why should His answer to my message be in proportion to my intelligence? Because in the world of prayer there can be no wireless telegraphy. That is as true of man's requests to man as of man's requests to God. The strength of any appeal which I make to you depends, not on the loudness of my cry, but on the community of my sympathy. The ear which listens to a petition is always the sympathetic ear; and the basis of all sympathy is a common want. On what

ground does God hear the cry, "Give us this day our daily bread"? I am not afraid to say it is on the ground of a common want—hunger. God has the hunger of the heart—love. It is by that hunger He hears the voice of your destitution; the common understanding makes your words audible, answerable. There are said to be things which God "knoweth afar off." What things are these? They are the things outside of His sympathy. I think that in the next world we shall have a new measurement of distance. We estimate distance here by miles of space; we shall estimate it yonder by miles of sympathy. The messages from mind to mind may travel quick or slow; but whether they travel quick or slow does not depend on the space; it depends on the spirit. Place Judas beside John, and place Nathanael at the other side of the universe. Let John send two messages on the wings of thought —one to Judas and the other to Nathanael. I feel sure that the message from John to Nathanael will reach its goal long before the message from John to Judas. For, John and Nathanael are near neighbours in the spiritual world. There is no sea between them—not though material oceans intervene, not though continents divide. But the drying-up of an intervening ocean would not bring John and

Judas near. The gulf between Dives and Lazarus is not a sheet of water; it is a difference of soul.

My God, I am often appalled by the sense of material distance between my soul and Thee. It seems as if my prayer had too far to travel. I say with one of Thy servants, "What is man that Thou shouldst be mindful of him!" I stand beneath the lights of the firmament and tremble; my heart fails in the presence of Thy heavens. I have read that Thy disciples cried, "Lord, teach us to pray!" In the light of this modern universe I have even more need of the lesson than they. How shall I escape this modern universe with its boundless spaces and its measureless heights? Can I get back to the old world—the world where earth was the centre and all things circled round it? No, I can never do that any more. But Thou canst lead me to prayer by a more excellent way. Instead of leading me back, lead me forward! Make me, not less modern, but more! Let me learn the secret of prayer, not by becoming old-fashioned, but by foreseeing the coming fashion, the newest fashion! Teach me how distance will be measured in the world to come! Teach me that in Thy world all likeness is nearness! Teach me that all sympathetic souls touch! Teach me why these words are written,

"He is near to all that call upon Him"! My call is my chariot. My prayer is not my *cry* to Thee; it is my flight to Thee. My wish is my way; my longing is my locomotion. I sail by every sigh; I near by every need; I am winged for Thee by every want of Thee. Through the voidness of my soul without Thee do I voyage to Thy home; every stage of my joy is a stage of my journey. The movement of my heart is the short road to Paradise; there is no space to them that fear Thee.

LIV

INDIFFERENCE

"Woe to them that are at ease in Zion!"—Amos vi. 1.

THE saddest thing in this world is indifference. It is sadder than any heresy, than any false belief—I would even say, than any honest *un*belief. The mind that has struggled into rest is to be envied; the mind that has struggled without finding rest is to be appreciated; but the mind that has never experienced *any* struggle is to be pitied. The seer of Patmos says that if a man is not hot he had better be cold. I think he is right. I can understand a man looking at Nature and believing; I can understand a man looking at Nature and doubting; but I cannot understand a man not looking at Nature at all. That wonder should turn to worship is natural; that wonder should lead to scepticism is possible; but that a mind should exist *without* wonder is inconceivable—it can only be explained by a

want in the mind itself. And if indifference is the saddest of all things, it is beyond measure sad when it occurs in serious circumstances. To be at ease is, for a mind, never a high thing; but to be "at ease in Zion"—that is an awful calamity! It is like laughter in the midst of a funeral; it is like Wordsworth's little girl dancing round the grave. Frivolity is a sad spectacle at all times; but in the presence of great things it is specially sad. To be frivolous under the awful dome of night, to be frivolous amid the products of the artist, to be frivolous in an hour of national triumph, to be frivolous in a season of earthly calamity, to be frivolous when in *any* form the glory or the shadow of God is passing by—that is to be less than man, for that is to be at ease in Zion.

Lord, I often lament that this human soul of mine is the most burdened creature in the universe. I often contrast my care with the lark's carol and my sigh with the nightingale's song. Teach me that my burden is my glory! Teach me that I am *not* "at ease in Zion" just because I *am* "in Zion"! The shadow that dims my sight is Thy shadow; the weight that impedes my wing is my sense of *Thee*. I should be more reckless if I were less responsible. If I were not my brother's keeper I too might have perpetual song. But with that weight upon me,

I cannot. Would I have it otherwise, my Father? No—a thousand times no! I would rather walk with Thee in the shade than soar with the lark in the light. My care is better than a carol, my sigh is better than a song. I have seen the King in His beauty; therefore I pity the slave in his deformity. I have heard Thy far-off music; therefore earth's discords grate upon my ear. I have gazed upon Thy spotless robe; therefore my brother's rags rend me. Thy rainbow brings my flood. It is Thy beauty makes my burden; it is Thy glory makes my gloom; it is Thy nearness makes my night. Shall I not take Thy yoke upon me—the yoke that comes from *seeing* Thee! Shall I refuse the pain Thy child alone can feel! Shall I reject that pressure of the heart which comes only to him on whom Thou hast laid Thy hand! Nay, my Father; rather would I abide with Thee and bear Thy shadows in my soul. To lose the ease of the lark is the price I pay for Zion.

LV

THE PARADOX OF CHRIST'S PERMANENCE

"I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel."—Rev. xiv. 6.

THERE is to my mind a strange paradox in these words. It lies in the seeming contradiction between the word "fly" and the word "everlasting." That which is flying or fleeting is commonly reckoned the opposite of that which is everlasting or permanent. The act of flight suggests mutability—change of sphere, alteration of environment. The angel whom St. John sees in the midst of heaven is not a stationary form; he is in continual movement; he is "flying." And yet, in his hand there is something which is *not* moving—something which is constant, changeless, invariable—the everlasting gospel. How are we to account for this strange conjunction of opposite things? By an appeal to experience. The test of all

permanence is the shifting character of the surrounding scene. If you could imagine a land where the wind never blew, where the floods never rose, where the wing of bird never fluttered, where the foot of man or beast never trod, there would be no wonder in hearing that a scroll of paper had remained there in the same spot for years. But if you were told that the scroll of paper had remained while the wind was boisterous, while inundations were prevalent, while feet many and rapid were scouring the way, you would deem it a great marvel. And why? Because it would be the changeless amid the mutable, the permanent amid the fleeting, the abiding force amid a transition scene. That is the everlastingness which St. John saw in the gospel; that is the everlastingness which you can see this day. The Buddhist is older than the Christian; but his angel is not "flying." His angel has no wings. Men are all dead in the land of the Buddhist. The heavens are windless, the seas are waveless, the hearts are pulseless. But my Christ is on the wave, my Christ is amid the storm. He is out on the troubled waters and is not drowned; He is wrapped in the fiery furnace and is not hurt. Buddha survives in Asia; Jesus persists in Europe. Buddha watches the sleepers; Jesus endures the wakeful. Buddha keeps the trees

of the garden; Jesus keeps the hearts of the wayward. Buddha rests on a lake; Jesus walks on the sea.

Jesus, let me come to Thee on the waters! The only permanence I *value* is permanence on the waters. I have heard of the wonderful duration of buried cities—of Pompeii, of Herculaneum, of Nineveh. I do not value *that* permanence; they endure because the air is excluded, because friction is excluded. But I want something that can last *spite* of air, spite of friction, spite of resistance—something which can get through when the doors are shut. I can get many to abide with me under a sky of changeless blue. But when fast falls the eventide, when the darkness deepens, when change and decay in all around I see, then gods and men alike flee away. Not so *Thou*, my Christ! Thou goest not down with my sun, Thou goest not back with my tide. I can say to other masters, "Abide with me in the desert"; to Thee I say, "Abide with me in the city." I want Thee for the place where the angel is *flying*—where events move rapidly. I want Thee for changes of the day—for vicissitudes of the hour. I want Thee for my fleeting moments, my shifting scenes, my varying fortunes. I want Thee for my weakness and my weariness, for my trifles and my troubles,

for my searchings and my sighings, for my pains and my perils, for my tempests and my tears. I want Thee for life's transitions—from Cana to Calvary, from Bethlehem to Bethany, from Galilee to Gethsemane. I want Thee for the path which the Buddhist cannot tread; "Bid me that I come to Thee on the *waters!*"

LVI

THE TRUE BROAD-CHURCH

"He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers."—MAL. iv. 6.

MY first interpretation of this passage was, "When the Messiah comes, He will consecrate the relations of family life." But on reflection I remembered that family life was consecrated *before* Christ's coming—specially consecrated by the *Jew*. I have changed my view, therefore, of the meaning of these words. Is not *this* their real significance—"When the Messiah's work is inaugurated, there will be established a sympathy between the generation going out and the generation coming in—between the old faith and the new." In the natural heart it is very difficult to get a sympathy between the views of the fathers and the views of the children. The fathers think the children too broad; the children think the fathers too narrow. There is only one way of

reconciling them, and that is the Christian rule of putting one's self in the place of another. If the child could live in the father's experience, it would see that the old doctrine is the only thing *fitted* to the father; if the father could live in the child's experience, he would see that the new doctrine is the only thing fitted to the child. Each would perceive that both faiths are "beautiful in their time." But to get that, you must have Christ. To put myself in your place is a most unselfish act. To see a thing, not as it is, but as *you* see it, to live in your thought, to feel with your heart, to struggle, in fancy, with the sense of your limitations, to make allowance for the changes of the years and the shifting of the scenes—that requires the spirit of Him who put Himself in the place of sinners.

Teach us, O Lord, the spirit of charity for views not our own! We preach charity towards human *wants*. We preach charity towards human deeds. But we neither preach nor practise charity towards human opinions. We speak of the Broad-Church and the Narrow; but in truth we are all narrow—alike the old and the new. Teach us that whatever excludes the mental need of another is narrow! Tell the fathers that they are narrow when they refuse to let the children extend the old field! Tell the children that they are narrow when they

refuse to include in the new field the ground trod by their fathers! Let the old men throw themselves forward; let the young men throw themselves back! I used to think that youth was the time for hope, and age the time for memory. But in the light of Thy truth I seem to learn otherwise; it is *age* that needs hope, and youth that needs memory. Give hope to age, O Lord—power to look forward to the possibilities of to-morrow! Give memory to youth, O Lord—power to look backward to the limits of yesterday! Give the fathers the wing of anticipation; give the children the wing of retrospect! Say to the one, "Arise and depart, for this is not your rest"; say to the other, "Son, remember"! Breathe upon the fathers the spirit of the world to come; breathe upon the children the spirit of the world that is past! Reveal to the old that their life is but in its morning; reveal to the young that they cannot forget yesterday's afternoon! Point the autumn to the rising, the spring to the setting, sun! Then shall the heart of the fathers and the heart of the children meet together, and the old and the new shall be joined in one wedding ring.

LVII

THE PRIESTHOOD OF GOD

"The Lord hath prepared a sacrifice."—Zeph. i. 7.

WHAT is the unique feature in Christianity? Not the Doctrine of the Trinity—you will find that in India. Not the Doctrine of the Divine in the human—you will find that in Greece. Not the recognition of a Spirit of God—you will find that in the first chapter of Genesis. Not the faith in immortality—you will find that in Egypt. Not the offering up of sacrifice by man—you will find that in every heathen worship. But there is one thing which you will find only in Christianity. Every other worship speaks of man offering to God; in Christ we have the startling paradox of God offering to man. "The *Lord* hath prepared a sacrifice." That is a new prophetic note in the faiths of the world. All the nations had been bringing their sacrifices to *Him;* here He brings His sacrifice to them. Imagine a state of things in which the injured had to pay.

Imagine a constitution of society in which the assaulted man was the man who had to make reparation for the fray—had to offer a sacrifice in expiation of the fault of others. "What a fantastic conception!" you say. And yet if you could imagine a world in which the injured man was always the man of love, this would become the common experience. Indeed, with all our talk about the sacrifice that waits on sin, you will find that it is the *sinless* who pay. It is not on the guilty that the deepest sacrifice falls, even where the guilty are punished. It is the innocent who suffer most. One of the Jewish psalmists cries, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy law." It is the cry of every good father in the moment of a son's disgrace. It says, "*I* am the real victim; *I* am the true object for pity; on *me* the actual penalty falls." Sin's victim is ever the purest. It is the lamb without spot that suffers. When you pierce the guilty, it is *another's* heart that bleeds. When you smite the sinner, it is another's voice that weeps. When you sentence the man of crime, it is another's soul that is weighted with sorrow. The sins against love are borne by the loving.

O Lord my God, *Thou* art the victim of this world's sin. To Thee belongs its sacrifice, on Thee its bitter cross is laid. Thy spotless love

makes Thine the penalty. "There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin." If there had been another love like Thine, there would have been another suffering like Thine; but there was none; therefore Thou hast trodden the winepress alone. Mine has been the guilt, but Thine has been the pain. Thou hast bled where I blushed not; Thou hast groaned where I grieved not; Thou hast sorrowed where I sighed not. Deeds that broke not my rest have broken Thy heart. Memories that brought me no care have brought Thee a cross. Retrospects that suggest to me no stain have left in Thee a sting. Thy love has lifted my liabilities. Thy pity has appropriated my penalties. Thy devotion has discharged my defalcations. Thou hast become answerable for my debts to man. I hear men say, "Jesus paid it all." Yes, and He is paying still. It is the *Divine* that repairs the rents of the human. Thou healest those whom I have wounded. Thou cleansest those whom I have stained. Thou lightest those whom I have darkened. Thou restest those whom I have ruffled. Thou receivest those whom I have expelled. Thou crownest those whom I have contemned. Thou usest those whom I have rejected. Thou leadest those whom I have caused to stray. Mine, O Lord, is the sin, but Thine is the sacrifice

LVIII

THE GLORY IN THE GLOOM

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place."—2 Pet i. 19.

THERE is nothing which predicts greatness so strongly as a light shining in a dark place. If you saw a youth who had been bred in poverty, who had lived in squalor, who was surrounded with the meanest companions and environed by the most ignoble associations, and who yet in every feature and movement betrayed an aristocratic air, what would you conclude? That his ancestors had seen better days, that he was born to better things, that he would probably rise to better circumstances. You would conclude this by reason of the present darkness. You would see nothing in the present to account for these flashes. If he had been surrounded by culture, the

flashes would prove nothing as to his origin; education would explain them. But when these have come forth out of darkness, when there is nothing around to elicit them, when they are in manifest contrast to their environment, you know assuredly that they are the proof of a lofty birth. Now, this is exactly the state of the human soul. The light within the soul comes from its darkest place. What is the darkest place of the soul? It is sin. *That* is the ignoble corner, the gloomy chamber, the unhallowed room. Yet it is in this room that the prophetic glory shines. As it shone out on Bethlehem's midnight, so shines it on the midnight of the spirit. It is from my sense of sin that my sense of greatness comes. Where do I get my sense of sin? It cannot be from sin itself. Can darkness see darkness! Can impurity read impurity! Can the dead speak to the dead! If the prodigal can detect his own rags in a world where all are prodigals, surely he must have in him the heredity of *another* world! Surely he must have somewhere gazed on a seamless robe and a spotless vesture! Surely he must have been born to wear the garment of Christ's righteousness and to be clothed in the livery of the House of God!

O Lord, I thank Thee that Thou hast made my weak spot the revealer of my strength. I thank Thee that in my darkest place I have learned the secret of my greatness. My hour of sorest pain, my hour of deepest humiliation, has been the hour which has whispered the tidings of my birth. There is a part of my house in ruins—the moral part; but it is through these broken walls I hear the music. How do I know that Thou hast an interest in my soul? Is it from the *unhurt* powers of my nature? No. Imagination could not tell me; it shows me such a vast world that I cry, "What is man!" Reason could not tell me; it cannot reach beyond the steps of its own ladder. The sense of beauty could not tell me; that has no voice for natures not sublime. But the wounded conscience tells me. None but Jacob's angel could inflict that wound—no hand but Thine, O Lord. My remorse is Thy remembrance of me; my pain is Thy pity for me; my groaning is Thy grief for me. Thou art never so near to me as in my moral storm. Could I *hear* that storm if Thy feet were not on the sea! Nay, my Christ, it is Thou that wakest my tempest; it is Thou that stirrest my soul; it is Thou that breakest my peace of death. My cloud is Thy shadow. The wind upon my

sea has been wafted by Thy wings; it is Thy *Spirit* that moves on the face of my waters. I have seen the surrounding darkness because Thou hast said, "Let there be light!"

LIX

THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

"I saw the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."—Rev. xxi. 2.

THE poet Herbert speaks of a beautiful day as "the bridal of the earth and sky." I think the same description might apply to this passage in Revelation. What the seer beheld in this vision was the adaptation of heaven to the wants of earth; that is really, I think, what is implied in the "coming down." We should have expected a converse spectacle. We should have looked for words like these: "I saw the earth ascend into the air until it was lost and overshadowed in a blaze of heavenly glory." All religions have sought a union of heaven and earth; but they have commonly sought it by the absorption of earth, not by the stooping of heaven. They have said, "You must accom-

modate yourself to the New Jerusalem; you must not expect the New Jerusalem to come down to *you*." We are constantly told to prepare to meet our God; it is, indeed, the typical command of the old dispensation. But the watchword of the new is the opposite of this; it is, "I go to prepare a place for *you*." One half our dread of death is the belief that the preparation must be all on the human side. It never occurs to us that, if man prepares to meet God, God equally prepares to meet man. It is not enough that our future should be in a scene of grandeur; it must be in a descending grandeur—the New Jerusalem must "come down." It must come with a marriage ring, "as a bride adorned for her husband." My wants must find their object. Many of my desires have never been mated here—I doubt if *any* has found its perfect ring. The eye has never seen the beauty which the fancy has not transcended. The ear has never heard the music which the thought has not excelled. The hand has never achieved the work which has left no flaw behind. The feet have never pursued a pleasure which has not faded in an hour. All these have found *imperfect* wedding bells. But the heart, the heart—where has *its* marriage been! Has love been satisfied below! Has not her marriage ring been broken even

on the bridal morn! Where is its promised permanence! Where is its chanted changelessness! Where is its fancied claim to a fadeless crown! The desires of the heart have never found their bridal day.

My soul, O Lord, is incomplete without Thee. It is not that without Thee I have too much of earth; it is the reverse of that—I have too little. Eden has only yielded us half an apple after all. Earth has never finished her own buildings; in her best structures there is always wanting a little stone. This world is full of unmarried things—unfinished harmonies, unroofed dwellings, unfulfilled desires. I would fain see these completed, O my God. I know that there are structures more magnificent than these; but they are also more unearthly, and earth is my native land. Therefore I would rather complete these than build the new. Let thy Jerusalem come *down* —come down and supplement the earth! I would not leave my old life in fragments even to be lifted into higher glory. Let Thy New Jerusalem come down—to finish, to perfect, to supply the missing stone! Come down Thyself to see the old Tower of Babel that has tried to reach unto heaven and failed! Put a new flight of steps on the old stair! Crown the path where once we erred! Gild

the day where once we wandered! Prosper the work where once we fainted! Resume the journey where once we halted! Complete the picture where the brush dropped from our hand! Many would rejoice to say, "The old world is ended"; rather would my gladness be, "The old world is finished." It *will* be finished when my desires have found their marriage bells.

LX

THE ALTERNATIONS OF LIFE

"He giveth His beloved sleep."—Psa. cxxvii. 2.
"And the angel that talked with me waked me."—Zech. iv. 1.

HERE are two opposite aspects of the work of Christ in the soul. We commonly recognise only one of them. We all associate religion with peace—with what is called the sleep of God's beloved. We have been taught in times of storm and stress that there is to be found a peace which passeth knowledge, a rest to the inner man. So habitual has been this association that we are apt to forget it is only one side of the Christian life, that it has another side—the side revealed by Zechariah. It is quite true that in the hour of trouble a Christian finds peace; but it is equally true that in an hour of peace the Christian often finds trouble. The one seems consistent with God's promise; but the other appears a breaking of the promise. They are, in truth, both fulfilments. God has

promised each of these experiences. There are times when he gives His beloved their sleep, and there are times when He sends His angel to wake them. If there are seasons when the Great Physician administers to His patients a sedative, there are also seasons in which He administers to them an irritant. Peace without conflict is as bad as conflict without peace. It is not good to sleep too long. We need an alarm bell of some kind. Noise, as well as silence, may be a gift from our Father. There are scenes of beauty which are lost to us just from unbroken contemplation; there are domestic joys which are uncherished by us just from their daily recurrence. Nothing makes the soul sleep like the monotony of mercies; on the banks of that rhythmic stream we become dead to the rhythm. But if the current be impeded, if an obstruction bar the stream, if a famine of waters bid it relax its speed, then indeed I wake to yesterday's music. It comes to me like the murmur of the shell whose voice has only grown beautiful in the absence of the parent sea.

Lord, I want both Thy pillar of fire by night and Thy pillar of cloud by day—Thy peace in the shadow, Thy shading in the sun. And because I need both, Thou hast given me both. There is no Gethsemane without its flower; there is no rose without its thorn. Men call this the uncer-

tainty of life. Rather would I see in it the certainty of Thy mercy. To me life would be far more uncertain if there were not these alternations of the light and the cloud. There would be more deaths untimely if Thou didst not give Thy beloved a sleep in their sorrow; there would be more lives unfruitful if Thou didst not bid Thine angel wake them to their joys. It is to keep my life certain that Thou keepest me ever between the calm and the breeze. If the waters ran up to the brim, they would overflow me; if the waters revealed no ripple, they would deaden me. My safety cometh from life's changes; if life were less variable, I should be less secure. Therefore, O Father, I say, Beset me with Thy varied presence—Thine hours for sleep and Thine hours for waking! Beset me at night with Thy glowing fire, by day with Thy cooling wind! May I rest in my labours; may I wake in my responsibilities! In the tempest of my heart, say, "Peace, be still"; on the mount of my vanity, cry, "Arise and depart, for this is not your rest"! Prepare for me a table in my wilderness; overthrow for me the tables of traffic I have set up within Thy temple! Compass me, in grief, with songs of deliverance; surround me, in joy, with thoughts of solemnity! So shall my evenings and mornings together make one day; so shall all my life be girt about by Thee.

LXI

THE UNEXPECTED DOOR OF REVELATION

"A voice came out of the cloud."—Mark ix. 7.

IF you had been standing on the Mount of Transfiguration you would have said, "Here at last I shall have a revelation from the silent heaven." You would have felt in looking round that there was hardly a single door through which that revelation might not come. You would have expected it from the glittering garments. You would have looked for it from the shining face. You would have anticipated it from the two celestial visitors. You would have been prepared to receive it from the audible words of communion between the two worlds. You would have said, "There is only one little corner where I expect a shut door; I see a tiny cloud covering a bit of the blue." Now, what is the real state of the case? In the whole of that

mountain scene there was only one object which became the avenue for revelation—it was the tiny cloud! None of the likely things became a medium. The white garments said nothing. The shining countenance revealed nothing. The celestial visitors brought nothing. The converse of heaven and earth explained nothing. But the cloud—the despised cloud—the rejected cloud—the cloud that seemed to throw a damper on the scene—that was the thing which spoke, that was the thing which revealed the glory of the Son of Man! Nobody would now deny that it is the cloud which has revealed Christ's glory; our watchword is not the shining of His countenance, but the shadow of His Cross. Yet not of Christ alone has the symbol proved true; the voice to you and me has come from the cloud. What reveals our higher birth? Is it the shining garment of our mountain moments—the triumphs of reason, the discoveries of science, the achievements of art, the advances of music? Not these. Is it the increase in the power of human converse—the marvels of steam and electricity? Not these. Is it the possession of tabernacles of gold—the trappings of wealth, the homes of luxury, the gardens of pleasure? Not these. It is our cloud that reveals our origin. It is our wants that prove our birth. It is our thirst that betrays our aristocracy.

It is the rent in our garment that shows how we in the body are not at home. We have torn our garb because it is too small for us; our cloud has made our parentage clear.

I thank Thee, O Lord, for the void places in my heart; they reveal more than does the furniture. I see Thee nearest where I am not filled; it is the *empty* air that gives me wings. All my treasures have come from the shadow. My faith needs the fog. My prayer needs the precipice. My trust needs the tempest. My sympathy needs the sacrifice. My mercy needs the miserable. My truth needs temptation. My pity needs painfulness. My peace needs powers opposing. My spotlessness needs contact with a stain. How could I hope if there were no haze! —hope would be lost in certainty. How could I be patient if there were no perils!—patience would melt in fruition. How could I be charitable if there were no cheerless!—charity would fade in wastefulness. How could I feel immortal if there were no insufficiency!—earth would be then my fitting rest. It is on the wings of weakness I fly to Thee. It is in the days of darkness I cry to Thee. It is in the sense of sinfulness I sigh to Thee. My gem lies in my conscious degeneracy; I discern my origin when I recognise the dust. The ring and the robe

may welcome me back, the music and the dancing may greet my return; but it is the famine that tells me I am wandered, it is the sense of the swine-husks that brings me home.

LXII

THE PROOF OF SPIRITUAL REST

"Walk in the good way, and ye shall find rest for your souls."—JER. vi. 16.

"WALK, and ye shall find rest." Is not that an incongruous statement. Is it not like saying, "Shut your eyes, and you will see." Are not walking and rest opposites; is not the one a movement and the other a stillness. Yes, in the world of *matter*. When we speak of a *body* at rest, we mean that it is motionless. But when we say that a soul is at rest, we mean just the contrary; we mean that it has become capable of movement. I do not think a soul ever begins to walk until it is at rest. What is your idea of a restless soul—of mental dispeace? Is it not your conception of a mind which is incapacitated from working, which is unable to concentrate itself. Mental dispeace is mental inactivity. Whenever we

attribute unrest to any part of our spiritual being we imply that it is a part not working, not fulfilling its function. A restless mind is a mind that cannot act. A restless heart is a heart that cannot love. A restless or wavering will is a will that cannot decide. It is only when the soul has begun to "lie down in green pastures" that it is able to walk in the paths of righteousness. It is not said, "Walk, and you will *get* rest"; it is, "Walk, and you will *find* rest." The rest is there already; it simply waits to be revealed. You will discover it by your power of walking. You will learn your peace by your prowess, your calm by your courage, your satisfaction by your strength, your repose by your running. You will say, "I must have had wonderful inward rest, since I have walked so far, fought so long, worked so well; I never could have soared so high unless my heart had seen its home."

Lord, nothing but Thy peace will give me strength for toil. I am easily wearied from without when I have not rest within. I move with tardy feet when my heart lies not on a couch of down. Often have I marvelled at that strength of Thine which could climb the Dolorous Way bearing a cross laden with the sins of all mankind. But I have found the secret now. Thy peace came *first*—came before

the Garden, came before the climbing. It was Thy peace that made the climbing possible, it was Thy peace that made the yoke easy and the burden light. Be *mine* Thy peace, O Lord—the peace before the battle! I too have steeps to climb, I too have crosses to carry; send me the rest of the heart ere they come! I have heard men say, "After dark the light comes"; but I would have light *in* the dark. I would not go into Gethsemane without peace, Thy peace, already in my soul. I would have an hour of Divine communion ere I go—an hour of human brotherhood, an hour for the breaking of bread. I would be warmed by earthly sympathy ere I go—would feel the clasp of kindred hands and the joy of a common fellowship. I would have the transfiguration light ere I go—the face radiant from within and the raiment white and glistening. Not as the world gives, give Thy peace to me! The world gives its peace to reward toil; give me Thine, to prepare for toil! The world gives its peace to exhausted energy; give me Thine, as a stimulus to action! The world gives its peace as a rest from labour; give me Thine, to wake me from repose and to nerve me for the coming day!

LXIII

THE SPHERE OF GREATEST DANGER

"He that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin."—JOHN xix. 11.

THESE words are spoken by Christ to Pilate. He tells Pilate that *his* part in the crucifixion is not so bad as the part taken by Caiaphas, "He that delivered Me unto you is a greater sinner than you, although you have the final blow to strike and the final act to play." This is a most remarkable judgment on the part of Jesus. To all outward seeming Pilate's was the murderer's hand. It was he who gave the sentence, it was he who ordained the cross. But our Lord virtually says that at a certain stage of wickedness things cannot be retrieved by *man*—the seed of badness must develop into the tree. Pilate happened to be *under* the tree. He had become heir to the bad deeds of others who had preceded him. It was no longer

possible for him to arrest the development of a national sin—it would have required a miracle. It could have been arrested at the beginning. But at the beginning it had been fostered. Caiaphas had planted it—Caiaphas was the deeper culprit; Pilate was more a victim than an agent. That is what Christ means, and it seems to me a thought suggestive for all time. Is it not true that the final and fatal act is often the least culpable act. If a man allows his passion to get habitual power over his reason, he may come at last to commit a great crime. And yet at this last hour he may be less to blame than in his morning. He may have come to a stage when he is helpless, hopeless, a mere puppet in the hands of that law of development which he has outraged and whose shadow *cannot* be sent back ten degrees. It is the morning that is the crucial time, the responsible time. It is the *beginnings* that are big with hope or fear. It is the *streams* of the river that make glad, or sorry, the city of our God. It is the evil done in the *dawn* that makes the blackest cloud in the day.

My brother, take heed that you make the outgoings of the *morning* to praise Him! It is only the outgoings of the morning that are wholly yours. When the afternoon comes, you will not be your own master; Caiaphas will have

become Pilate. Take heed to your beginnings—your initial acts! As the day advances, a temptation may pass beyond your power of government; watch its beginnings! Caiaphas did less outward harm than Pilate, yet his was the greater sin; it was the laying of the train underground. Beware of the train laid underground—of the seed sown in spring-time! Men look to the effects of autumn; to God, the tragedy lies in the spring. Men behold a harvest of evil and say, "This is the climax of the man's wickedness"; but God says, "His greatest wickedness was in the spring, when the surface was undisturbed and the corruption was all below." My brother, the trifles of earth are the great events of heaven; watch the trifles! Dress the small gardens; water the tiny flowers! Tremble at the first breach of truth! Avoid the beginnings of avarice! Move from the threshold of meanness! Fly from the brink of folly! Impugn the thought of impurity! Suffer not the jest about solemn things! Dismiss deceit from the *door!* Greet not with levity the grovelling of your spirit! These are the temptations of your *morning*—the temptations of Caiaphas; in these is fought the battle of your soul.

LXIV

DISENCHANTMENT

"Of whom is Hymenæus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme." —1 Tim. i. 20.

SURELY that is a strange school in which to learn such a lesson! It reads like saying, "I have sent my boy to a desert island that he may have some idea of the earth's population," "I have sent my girl to a bear-garden that she may have some notion of the charms of music." Is it not equally grotesque for Paul to say, "I have sent these two young men to the school of Satan that they may acquire a sense of the horror of blasphemy." No, for in this last case there is a peculiarity. The lesson we are to get about sin is not so much a learning as an unlearning. The young men in this passage, like all other young men, were under a delusion. They thought that sin was a beautiful thing—a

thing worth imitating. They dreamed of it as men used to dream of lands beyond the sea—as something which afforded scope for heroism. It seemed a grand thing to be thought naughty, to be labelled "dangerous." It was so like a cavalier to care for nothing, so like a trooper to swear, so like a brilliant man to break tender hearts. Paul says: "They are looking at a squalid village from the top of a hill; it seems picturesque in the distance. I will give them a near vision. I will loose the rein. I will let them go down. They shall taste the apples of the tree. They shall drink the waters of Marah. They shall touch the thorn which, afar off, seems so fair. And then the disenchantment will come. They will find a flaming sword in their fancied Eden. They will call upon the Cherubim to shut them out; they will pray to the trees to hide them. They will see that they have erred—mistaken the serpent for a seraph. They will stretch out their hands towards the vanished past; they will yearn for their undimmed yesterday."

I bless Thee, O Lord, for the words, "That they may learn not to blaspheme." They tell me in wondrous language that Thy mercy is not confined to the heavens—that it reaches even unto the clouds. Often Thou sayest, in human life, "Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone!"

I used to think it meant that Thy mercy had *abandoned* the man. But now I see it all. Thou hast suffered the lad to go to sea just that he may learn the hardship of it, the pain of it, the privation of it. Nothing else would have taught him. Seen from the distance, the ship looked Fairyland. The white sail caught the sun and the blue wave bathed the keel and the flag danced responsive to the breeze; and the boy clapped his hands and cried, "Let me go!" And Thou saidst, "Go!" Thou hast answered the prodigal's prayer to have his portion *apart* from Thee. Why didst Thou answer that prayer, O my Father? Because to Thy sight there were present the swine-husks and the faintness and the famine. Thou knewest that the music and the dancing were not in the land he sought—that he would only find them in Thee. Thou knewest that the ring and the robe were not in the spot he coveted—that he would only greet them in Thee. Thou knewest that the fatted calf was not for the feast he wanted—that he would only enjoy it with Thee. Thou knewest that when he saw sin near enough he would cry for the house of his Father. Therefore didst Thou answer his wicked prayer; therefore, O Lord, didst Thou let him go—not to kill but to cure, not to slay but to save, not to punish but to purify. Thou hast banished to beautify; Thou hast exiled to extri-

cate; Thou hast forsaken to fortify; Thou hast deserted to defend. Thou hast withdrawn Thy hand that Thy hand may be cherished for ever; bless the Lord, O my soul!

LXV

THE SANCTUARY IN PRIVATE LIFE

"Men shall worship Him, every one from his place."—ZEPH. ii. 11.

THE prophet says there is a time coming when there will be no distinction drawn between the secular and the sacred. In the Jewish dispensation it was not allowed that every man should worship God "from his place"—from the spot on which he was standing. On the contrary, there was one place where *all* were enjoined to worship—Jerusalem; it was to *her* the tribes of God were exhorted to go up, it was from within her gates that the smoke of the incense ascended. But the prophet says there is a new age coming when within his own gates every man shall have his own temple. There is a day approaching when there will be no need of locomotion to carry us from things temporal to things eternal. It will be done by a breath of the spirit, by a movement of the heart. I shall

not need to leave my place, in the sweet by and by—I shall worship *from* my place. No matter where my place may be, it will become my temple. Each service to man shall be called a service of God. No more shall it be said, "Go up to the house of the Lord"; we shall each worship from our place. The *mother* shall worship from her place; her altar of sacrifice will be the nursery. The daughter shall worship from her place; her offering to God will be her filial devotion. The servant shall worship from her place; her domestic service will be her Divine service. The merchant shall worship from his place; his gains will be a gathering for God. All song shall be a psaltery, all social music a sacred melody. Each gift shall be a garland for *Him*. My wealth shall wield His sceptre; my power shall plant His seed; my fame shall fan His praise; my voice shall vibrate to His name; my hand shall help His sanctuary; my feet shall follow His steps; my special grace shall minister to His spiritual glory. I shall not need to stand beside the cross, for I shall bear in my own body the dying of the Lord Jesus.

My afflicted brother, my afflicted sister, thou who art laid aside on bed of languishing and made useless for life's running, I have a message of comfort for *thee*. Thou canst worship from thy place—canst serve God from the couch

whereon thou liest. Thou art saying in thy heart, "I can never go up to Jerusalem to serve God; I can never be of any use in the things of the kingdom." But there is no longer any *need* for thee to go up to Jerusalem; thou canst serve God from thy place. Thy sacrifice is here—here on thy bed of pain. Thine offering is here—here in the silence of thy room. There may be few *witnesses* of thy sacrifice. But had Abraham many witnesses! Was not Mount Moriah as lonely as any sick-chamber—a solitary battle with his own will! Doubtless he thought he was being shunted from the world; but in truth he was making history—he was laying the foundation-stone of the kingdom of God. God's place for *thee* has been Mount Moriah—a solitary sacrifice. He may have called thee, as He called Abraham, to ascend the mount "early in the morning"—may have overshadowed thee while it was yet life's spring. Wilt thou say, "To what purpose is this waste"! Is the shadow of *God* waste! When the Spirit broods over the face of the waters and eclipses my sun, is that waste! When I am hid in the secret of God's pavilion, is that waste! Is not one hour of God's private teaching worth a whole day of His public school! O glorious eclipse, O splendid hiding, O grand obscurity, O shadow that tells of light, we shall not ask earth's broken ones to find a better place than *thee.*

LXVI

THE HOLY DAY AND THE HOLIDAY

"The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love truth and peace."—ZECH. viii. 19.

I UNDERSTAND the meaning of the passage to be that if religion is to become a thing of truth and peace it must be made a thing of joy and gladness. Four days are to be made feast-days. The worship of God is not to be associated with mere solemnity. It is not to be linked exclusively with the *serious* things of life—with death, with sin, with sorrow. It is to be wreathed with roses. It is to be clothed in bright colours. It is to be accompanied by music. It is to be greeted with smiles. In nothing was the Jew more wise than in this good rule. It would be well if we of modern days had remembered it. It is not often we see

our little Samuels making a recreation of calling on the Lord. Why so? Because the Lord is to us *not* a recreation. We never associate religion with a holiday, with an hour of pleasure, with a moment of relaxation. It always brings to us a sense of obligation, of restraint, of imposed fetters. Surely there is something wrong here! Should not the climax of worship be love! Is not love the holiday of the soul! Is it not the hour when I forget my cares, when I lose my burdens! Is it not the season when I get the sense that the lessons are all over, that the tasks are remitted, that the duties are annulled! The academy becomes an Arcadia. The law becomes liberty. The lesson hour is the leisure hour. The place of toil is a playground. Love makes the fretful free, the laden light, the weighted willing. Martha has ceased to be martyred; Peter numbers not his precepts to forgive; Elijah enlarges not on the troubles he endures. Pain becomes pleasure; merit melts; credit crumbles; the pride of doing good is prostrated in gladness. The love of truth and peace makes the fast-feast a feast-day.

Ye who have the care of little children, plant early in their hearts the thought that religion is a joy! Beware how you put a cypress in the place of a rose! Remember that the first plant-

ings in the soul tend to keep their places for ever! If you sow the seed of God beside a grave, it will remain beside that grave when the child is grown. It is hard for the later hours to undo the work of the morning. Our first garden should be planted with evergreens — things which keep their youth; take heed what you sow! It is not enough that you teach the child *reverence.* I do not think I would begin with reverence. I would begin with love. Let not the *solemnity* of religion be the foundation! Rather let your child see the ripple on the stream! Begin not by telling him what he must do for God; tell what God has done for him! Point not in the morning to the stern mountains of the Divine Righteousness! Take him first to Cana of Galilee! Let him see his Father in sympathy with his joys! Do not let him think that his gloom manifests God's glory! Do not let him dream that God smiles when he is smitten or frowns when he is festive! Do not let him link his Sabbaths with sadness or his church with chilliness or his prayers with pain! Sow his faith among the flowers, his religion in radiant places! Plant not his God where the willows wave; build not his temple where the desert dwells! Wreath his God with roses! Paint Him with pleasures! Surround Him with songs! Link Him with love! Reveal Him not

as burdensome but as beautiful, not as grave but as gracious, not as solemn but as social! He that serves God with gladness in the morning will find in God his peace when the day is far spent.

LXVII

THE HIGHEST EVIDENCE OF IMMORTALITY

"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. Philip saith unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us."—JOHN xiv. 2, 8.

I AM not aware that these verses have ever before been put together. And yet they are as closely connected as if they had been consecutive. Christ had been speaking of immortality and of the silence which even in *His* teaching hangs over the subject. A discussion had arisen as to "the way" of arriving at a clear conviction on this point. Thomas is of opinion that the true attitude for men is agnosticism, "We know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way!" But Philip takes another view, "Show us the *Father*, and it sufficeth us"—sufficeth us for a proof of immortality. This is what I understand him to mean. I read him as saying that for the belief

in a future state the one thing needed is a clear conviction of the existence of *God*. And I am bound to say that I agree with that statement. Personally, I should ask no stronger evidence of immortality than the distinct consciousness that I am in the presence of God. That is Tennyson's argument as well as Philip's; he says, "Thou art just; Thou wouldst not leave me in the dust." It is a bold saying; he founds his immortal hope not on God's grace but on His justice. I think he is right. If God made an *eagle* immortal, it would be an act of grace; the eagle's life is quite complete here, it needs no more. But to make *man* immortal, is only justice. His life is not complete here. It is a fragment. It is like the half of an unfinished, though inhabited, castle. Within that finished half there is a mass of unused furniture—furniture which can only be used in upper rooms. Shall the upper rooms never come! Shall there never be use for the furniture! Shall there be no completion of the building! Shall man be the one fragment in the universe—the bud that never flowers, the dawn that never spreads, the bird that never flies, the river that never reaches the sea! Surely that is incompatible with the justice of my Father!

Father in heaven, when I am in doubt about my future, let me gaze into Thy present face!

I feel, like Thy disciple, that a sure knowledge of *Thee* would suffice for my hope of immortality. I need not the opening of pearly gates. I need not the unsealing of crystal fountains. I need not the hearing of heavenly voices. I need not stand upon a Pisgah height with the Promised Land in view. I have only to gaze at *Thee*. I have only to remember that Thy work is never left unfinished, that when Thou hast begun a building Thou wilt perfect it. *Thou* art the evidence of my immortality, O Lord. I could not know Thee to be just, and doubt that I am immortal. My brightest evidence is not my perfections but my imperfections. It is just where I am weak that I am strong. I am too small for the clothes Thou hast made me. I have aspirings beyond my strength. I have desires beyond my power. I have visions beyond the range of my telescope. I have a will to be good beyond the capacity of my nature. I have purposes of action beyond the limit of any human life. I have debts to pay that would require eternity to discharge. Why hast Thou swathed me in such garments, if I am not to grow! Why hast Thou lodged me in such a dwelling, if I am never to have a larger income! I appeal to Thy justice, O my Father. I need no other proof of a life beyond; the thought of Thy justice sufficeth.

LXVIII

GOD'S ESTIMATE OF A MAN'S RELIGION

"He judged the cause of the poor and needy. Was not this to know *Me?* saith the Lord.—JER. xxii. 16.

THIS is to my mind one of the finest passages in the whole Bible. I have often seen people exercised as to what inscription they should put on the tomb of one who lived the life but did not accept the full creed. For such a man I can imagine no grander epitaph than this, "He judged the cause of the poor and needy—was not this to know *Me!*" The beauty of such an epitaph is that it is professedly God's epitaph. It is the *Divine* finger that is pictured writing the inscription. I think the prophet has in his mind something like this: A man has died in Judea whose orthodoxy has long been doubted. His memory is greeted with general obloquy. His funeral is sparsely attended. No Jewish rites of mourning are performed for him; he

is spoken of as one who knew not the Lord. But, on the morning after the funeral, some of his friends visit the grave and are startled. There, on the stone which had been left without one human note or comment, there are inscribed letters of flaming gold conveying the striking tribute, "He judged the cause of the poor and needy—was not this to know *Me!*"

O Thou who knowest our heart and readest our lives, we should like our inscription to be written by *Thee.* Often Thy inscription reverses ours. We with bated breath often speak of one departed—as if his fate were a subject not to dwell upon. And at that very moment heaven's arches may be ringing with halleluiahs, and Thy lips may be saying, "Good and faithful servant, well done!" The men of *our* world sign their confessions of faith by their *words;* but the men of Thy world sign their confessions of faith by their deeds. Often have I thought of that company at Thy right hand who received the mandate, "Enter ye into the joy of your Lord!" How surprised they were when they received it! Doubtless they had been counted among the *goats.* Doubtless a plebiscite of earth would have excluded them from Thy heaven. They had *not* "prophesied in Thy name"; perhaps they had refused to take *any*

religious name; they never knew that theirs was a service of *Thee.* They would have called their work secular, "When saw we Thee hungry and gave Thee meat!"—"We only gave it to poor human beings of the gutter." But the last judgment reversed the first judgment; *Thou* saidst, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least, ye have done it unto Me." Many sheep Thou hast, O Christ, which are not of our fold, yea, which are not of any fold. The cup of cold water may be only given in a disciple's name and not in Thine; yet Thou receivest it as Thy communion cup. Thou abidest with many at evening time when the day is far spent—when the faith is dim and the hope is low and there is nothing bright but love. Thou abidest with love when love alone is left. When I cannot praise and am powerless to pray, I can still break the bread to the hungry; and I am known to *Thee* by that breaking of bread. In the dearth of prayer, in the paralysis of praise, in the defiles of doubt, in the valley of despondency, there can still remain one light unwavering —the light of love to man; and if I keep that radiance undimmed, Thou shalt write upon my grave the imperishable epitaph, "He helped the poor and needy—was not this to know *Me!*"

LXIX

THE DANGER OF CENSORIOUSNESS

"As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."—Rom. xii. 18.

THE Revised Version renders this, "As much as in you lieth." It seems a trivial transposition; but it alters the whole sense of the passage; it makes Paul say, "Peace before all things!" I feel sure that was not the idea. I am convinced that the Authorised Version has here the best of it. Paul does not mean that we are to pay for peace any price within our power. What he says is, "So far as you can make peace by sinking your personal enmity, do it!—As much as lieth in *you*, live peaceably!" "As much as lieth in *you*" means: So far as the quarrel rests on *temper*, on private spite, on human jealousy. Paul would never ask you to compound with sin for the sake of unity, even though it were

in your power. But, on the other hand, even in raising our voice against a sin, he would have us carefully consider whether there is any personal motive for our indignation. I have known men lash themselves into fury against an act committed by Mr. A. who were mildly complacent toward the same act committed by Mr. B. I have known members of kirk-sessions who have violently opposed, this year, a scheme which they advocated last year; the reason was that this year the scheme was brought forward by a man whom they did not like. You may be quite right in your cause when you are quite wrong in your advocacy. Paul says: In any moment of heat or passion, search your heart with candles! See if your anger be only on the ground of principle! Examine if in your heart there is no root of personal bitterness! Try to put yourself in the place of a third party—one who is neither yourself nor the man whom you blame, but a spectator, a looker-on! Try how the object of your indignation would look, viewed by this impartial witness! Expel from your heart as much of the anger as comes from private enmity! Let it have no part in the storm; throw it overboard like Jonah! It is right to be disquieted on the sea of wrong; but take care that your disquiet comes from

the *sea*—take heed that it rises not from some personal hatred which is sleeping in the hold of the ship, and without which you would feel a deadly calm!

Lord, break down every inner wall that sets me at variance with my brother! I dare not ask for the breaking of every outer wall. If I hold a rampart of truth, I cannot desert that rampart for the sake of peace; it would be peace without honour. But break down my *inner* wall! Let me, in every war, desert the rampart of *self!* Let me lose sight of my own shadow! Let me keep my eye on the impersonal! Let me strike no enemy but the sin! If I have received wrong, teach me to say to my heart, "Should I feel it as much if it were done to another"! And if I must answer No, if I find that the storm comes not from the sea but from Jonah, help me to cast him out into the waters, O Lord! My heart is never so deceptive as when it blames a wrong. Often it seems to me that I am breaking Nebuchadnezzar's image when I am only breaking my brother's window. Often I think I am contending for the truth when I am merely contending for the triumph. Often I debar my neighbour from the forbidden tree merely lest his leaves should be greener than my own. Often I point

out my comrade's withered flower only that men may see I have companions in my sin. My heart is most apt to be evil in its advocacy of the good; illuminate my heart, O Lord!

LXX

THE UNPROMISING ENVIRONMENT

"Jesus was without in desert places; and they came to Him from every quarter."—MARK i. 45.

DARE we enter into this experience of the Son of Man? Yes, because He *is* the Son of Man; we can, without irreverence, make His human experience the type of our own. I think, then, this must have been one of the saddest hours in the whole life of Jesus. The saddest of all hours is that in which we are "without in desert places." The desert places always are "without." They put a man off the line; they shunt him. There is no pain equal to the pain of being off the line, of being shunted. To feel that you are not running with the stream, to feel that you have been left behind in the race, to feel that you are not in communication with the main current—this, for an active life, is a fearful thing. I think the human soul of Christ must have been specially straitened at this

moment. He seemed to be held back from His baptism—held back by the sheer force of an obscure environment, by the necessity to dwell alone. And yet, what was the state of the case? Mark tells us. He says that Christ's solitary hour proved to be His most crowded hour, "They came to Him from every quarter." They made His desert the metropolis. Can you point to any such experience in *your* life? I can in mine. I can declare, in looking back, that the stone I repudiated in my building has always proved itself the head of the corner. There have been days seemingly uneventful when I have felt the sense of neglect. But in the retrospect these are my red-letter days; I find that in their cool and quiet hours the Lord God was walking. I suppose Philip grumbled when he was sent into the desert; it seemed a poor diocese for a burning missionary spirit. He saw there only one solitary carriage and one solitary man in it. But the man in that carriage was himself a kingdom. Philip caught in one draught more fish than had been gathered by all the disciples together in the boats which plied from morning till evening.

Lord, I have seen Thee in two moments—a moment in the city and a moment in the desert. I have seen Thee amid the exultant crowd—Thy path strewn with palm-leaves and Thine ear

greeted with plaudits; and I have seen Thee treading the winepress alone—the palm-leaves all withered and the plaudits all silent. And as I looked I said, "Surely Thy crowded way will be Thy glorious way; surely the desert road will have no place in Thy kingdom!" But lo, my Lord, it has been all otherwise! It is Thy *desert* that has broken into singing; it is Thy wilderness that has blossomed as the rose! I called Thy wreath of palms God's providence, and I called Thy wreath of thorns God's cloud; but the palms have been Thy cloud and the thorns have been Thy sunshine. The suburb has become the city and the city has become the suburb. I can never again trust my judgment of earthly things; thou hast exalted the valley and brought the mountain low. I can never again distrust my desert hour. Each manger henceforth will have its possible star. Each midnight henceforth will have its possible song. Each swelling Jordan henceforth will have its possible vision. Each hunger in the wilderness henceforth will have its possible angel. Each bitter cup henceforth will be a possible gift from my Father. Each cross of to-day will henceforth be to-morrow's possible crown. Thou hast revealed a new road to promotion, for Thou hast entered into life by the strait gate and the narrow way.

LXXI

NAZARETH AND CAPERNAUM

"Ye will surely say unto Me, Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Thine own country."—LUKE iv. 23.

OUR Lord here anticipates an objection which will be raised to His religion—which will be raised, not by those remote from Him, but by those nearest to Him. He says that the complaint will be made by those in His vicinity that men till recently outside seem more privileged than they. And truly His anticipation has been realised. We often express surprise at the glowing rapture of souls suddenly converted. We say, with the elder brother in the parable, "All these years have I served thee, and thou never gavest me even a kid that I should make merry; but when my brother that has devoured thy substance has come, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf!" Never did our Lord show a deeper knowledge of human nature. Nazareth

was the place of His upbringing—the place where men had seen Him from day to day in unbroken sequence; yet in Nazareth He had wrought no miracle. Capernaum was an outside city where, as yet, He had little been; but in His flying visits Capernaum had witnessed wonderful works. The joy of Capernaum was greater than the joy of Nazareth. And the joy of Capernaum always *is* greater than the joy of Nazareth. Those with whom Christ has abode since their childhood see less of His miracles than those whom He unexpectedly visits. What then? Is the privilege of Capernaum greater than the privilege of Nazareth? No, assuredly. I would rather live in Nazareth than in Capernaum. What is the difference between maternal love and romantic love? It is just the difference of Nazareth and Capernaum. Maternal love is unconscious of a crisis; it has known and loved its object from the very beginning. But romantic love had a convulsive moment—a moment when it recognised its own existence, and saw its object in a new form. Romantic love is conscious of a miracle—of a transforming hour which made life's water wine. But maternal love has no sense of any miracle; it says to its object, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." And just on that account, is it not the

better love! It is too habitual to be wonderful. It breathes too freely to be aware of its breathing. It is its very place which keeps it from rapture; it has less joy because it has larger light.

Lord, there are still among us those who come to Thee by night and those who come to Thee by day. There are some like Nicodemus; they are driven to Thee by the shadows; they seek Thee as a refuge from doubt. There are some like Nathanael; they find Thee when they are sitting under their own fig-tree—find Thee without a struggle in their souls. Nathanael often laments his want of a night experience. He weeps that he can point to no transition moment—no moment when he was rescued from the storm. Dry his tears, O Lord! Tell him that though the younger brother has more credit, the elder has more comeliness! Tell him that the heart already harmonious needs less conflict! If I were asked to choose, I would rather meet Thee at Nazareth than at Capernaum. Does not the gentleness of the transit indicate the congruity of the nature. Does it not mean that I was already at the door of Thy dwelling, waiting to get in. I know Thou hast a way through the sea and a path through the deep; but let me not despise myself that I found Thee among the flowers! Rather let my heart be glad that it

bloomed at *once* in Thy presence, blazed instantaneously into summer at Thy touch! Rather let my heart be glad that it was always so near to Thee, so tuned to Thee! Rather let my heart be glad that I am Thy captive unconquered, Thy servant unsubdued, Thy bondsman unbroken, Thy follower unfretted, Thy convert unconstrained, Thy messenger unmutilated, Thy disciple with an undimmed eye! By this I know that I was made for Thee.

LXXII

THE MYSTICAL AND THE PRACTICAL

"How precious are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! When I awake, I am still with Thee."—PSA. cxxxix. 17, 18.

I WAS long puzzled to find the connection of these words; and the commentators did not help me. At last I think I have found it. I interpret thus the 17th and 18th verses: "To think of thee, O Lord, is a very precious thing; Thy mysteries are so deep that I get lost in reverie. Yet my love for Thee is not confined to my thinking about Thee. When I awake from my reverie, when I pass into the active work of life, when I move amid earthly objects and engage in secular pursuits, my heart is as much with Thee as when I am alone in Thy presence; my work for man is a service of Thee." That is what I understand the Psalmist to mean. And what he says is true. It is not only true of religious love, but of all love. If you have an object of supreme affection, you do

not divide your day between your love for him and your work in the world. There is no part of your worldly work which is not lit by your love, there is no part that is not better done on account of your love. Love will help your music as much as your musing, your drawing-room equally with your dreaming, your social hour not less than your silent orison. You will walk further without weariness, fast longer without faintness, compass more without complaining. Love can muse when the fire burns; but love can also help to *light* the fire. Love can dream of its object dressed in gold; but love can also mend a tattered robe and repair a rent garment. Love can say, "The thought of thee is precious"; but love can also cry, "My thought of other things is helped by thee."

Lord, I often awake from my dream and say, "How dreadful is this place!" It is not the dream that is dreadful, but the awakening. The bustle of life seems incongruous with the hour of communion. We say, "The sacramental symbols are about to be withdrawn; we are going forth from the Divine Presence into the world once more." Nay, my Father, then were the awakening indeed a dreadful place; then would I cry with Moses, "If Thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence!" But Thy presence *will* go with us; in our waking from the trance

of beauty we shall be still with Thee. This world would be truly a dreadful place without the dream of *Thee*. Thou must be its *waking* dream, O Lord. I need the poetry of life to sustain its prose; I cannot walk till I have been on the wing. They tell me that if I dream of Thee I shall be unfitted for life's reality. Nay, my Father; I am unfit for the waking without the memory of the dream. It is in vain Thine angel cries, "Let me go! for the day breaketh." It is *because* the day breaketh that I cannot let him go. The daybreak would be a heart-break if Thine angel were not there. I need Thee for the hour of bustle, I need Thee for the hour of burden. I cannot tread the earth till I have dwelt in heaven; I am unripe for this world till I have seen the world to come. All my secular springs are in *Thee*. My judgment is balanced in Thee. My tremors are calmed in Thee. My temper is sweetened in Thee. My foresight is quickened in Thee. My face is radiated in Thee. My voice is tuned in Thee. My action is graceful in Thee. My politeness is complete in Thee. My manner is brilliant in Thee. I am never successful in the secular till I am steeped in the power of the sacred; O God of Bethel's dream, guard fast my waking hours!

LXXIII

SERVICE IN PROSTRATION

"Thus saith the Lord, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness: even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest."—JER. xxxi. 2.

WHAT a strange time to find grace!—in the wilderness!—in the place where the means of grace are not *expected* to be found! There is a deeper paradox still. Jeremiah says that the grace came just at that moment when the fate of Israel seemed most hopeless. It came when God "caused her to rest" in the wilderness—forbade her to advance. Do you and I not know such times in *our* life—times of enforced inactivity. I think, of all seasons of adversity, they are the worst to bear. No labour of the hand is half so irksome as the hand's paralysis. There is something which is a harder trial than either labour or ladenness; it is to be laid aside from both. The wilderness

is bad enough; but to be compelled to *lie down* in the wilderness, to be forced to *fold the hands* in the desert, to be forbidden to take a step towards *extrication* from the calamity—this is surely a fearful thing, the most fearful thing of all! And yet it was from these dread times of enforced inaction that Israel's glory sprang. She never sang so sweetly as at night. It was when her harp-string was *broken* that her melody was most melodious. It is from the *desert* that she sings the song of Balaam. It is from mountain *caves* that she sings the songs of David. It is from a land of *exile* that she sings the songs of Ezekiel and Jeremiah. It is from the ruins of her dead past that in front of her second temple her greatest psalmists sing. The fragrance of the ointment has come from the *shattered* box; at the *evening* time there has been light. Other empires have reached their glory at the top of the hill; Israel has found grace in the *wilderness*—greatness in her hour of prostration.

My brother, are you surprised that God should compel you at times to rest—should weaken your strength in the way, should curtail your power of action. Are you surprised that He should arrest the building of your temple or interrupt your missionary journey or lay you aside from active service. Have you ever con-

sidered that there is a service of God which is *not* active. Have you ever considered that there are things which come into this world only to *be*. The poet speaks of flowers born to blush unseen and waste their sweetness on the desert air. Why "waste"? Are there not three voices of the verb "to live"—"being," "doing," and "suffering"! There are flowers of the garden; they make garlands of joy; they deck the bouquet, they adorn the triumph. There are flowers of the hospital; they minister to the weary eyes of those in pain. But there are also flowers of the forest; they have no mission to man whatever; they are unobserved by human eye. Are they, then, wasted? No; they have fulfilled their destiny. They have come into the world simply to *be*. Their mission is to declare that being is itself beautiful. Why was your infant born that lived but for a day? To prove the value of one *spark* of life in the eyes of your Father—to show that even where there is no wood and no lamb for the burnt-offering the fire itself in His sight is infinitely precious. Say not that there is no grace in the wilderness! Say not that there is no manna in the desert! Say not that the music of the stream is useless when it strikes upon no ear! The brook sings not in vain if it sings to your Father. The bird carols not idly if it carols to its God. The

flower blooms not wastefully if it blooms in the heart of Heaven. You may be content to lie on your bed and be silent if you can say with the Psalmist, "My voice shalt *Thou* hear in the morning."

LXXIV

GRATITUDE TO OUR FIRST HELPERS

"Andrew first findeth his own brother Simon."—JOHN i. 41.

ANY one who first saw these two brothers would have predicted the foremost place for *Andrew*. It was he that brought out the genius of Peter. Without him Peter would have been nowhere—never heard of in the Church or the world. It was Andrew who caught the original flame of Christ; Peter only lighted a match at his brother's fire. One would have said, "This will always be the leading man, the dominant man; the other must be content to be a satellite." And yet the judgment would have been wrong; Peter was the planet and Andrew the satellite. Andrew taught Peter to run; but Peter outstripped him. Andrew lighted Peter's lamp; but Peter outshone him. Andrew planted Peter's soul; but Peter outgrew him. Was Andrew, then, a failure; did he belie the magnificent promise of his morning? No; he

fulfilled that promise. He had a particular mission in the world—to find out the genius of others and then to disappear. There are men whom God raises up for the sake of those who are to follow them. You will meet them amongst the teachers of our Sunday schools and day schools. The relation of the teacher to the pupil is the relation of Andrew to Peter. He is at present above his boys; but in the natural course of things his boys will be above him. Just because they belong to a younger generation, they are likely in the future to see a greater light. The teacher's province is to find the place for each lamp and to set it aglow. Its glow will probably far surpass his own; that is what he should wish, that is what he should strive for. When that happens it will not prove him a failure, but a success. His province is not to plant seeds which will reach the height of present trees, but to plant seeds which will surpass in growth all the trees of to-day. If he is a good teacher he lives for his own dwarfing. He is to find those who will be fit for a coming age, a larger age, an age that will require higher capacities to guide it. Of every boy in his school he would like to say, "He must increase, but I must decrease." He is a lighter of lamps for the future—of lamps worthy to gladden more developed eyes than ours.

My soul, do not forget those who have found thee! Remember, somebody has found thee. Be thou ever so much a Peter, thou hadst once need of an Andrew. Somebody started thee—somebody that is now inferior to thee. Thou hast outstripped him, but he gave thee wings. Do not forget Andrew because thou hast outstripped him—because he is now obscure and unknown. He has fulfilled his mission—and his mission was to find *thee*. Give back the debt that thou owest! Far as thou hast passed him by, thou art his debtor. It was his flash that set thee aflame. It was perhaps a word spoken by the wayside, perhaps a cloud dispelled in the class-room, perhaps a mercy extended to misdeeds. Whatever it was, it remains thine undischarged debt to him. He found thee in thy rising; go back to find him in his setting! He may be dwelling in a garret. He may be living in a den of poverty. He may be struggling with the wolf at the door. He may have been left high and dry on the beach by the very tide that was moving to *thee*, Yet that beach on which he lies should be sacred to thee. Look back on it betimes from the sea on which thy bark is gliding! Thine eye is habitually on the west—on thy sun's completed glory. Shall it not rest sometimes on the east—on the days of thy dawn! Thou hast years of hope;

give an hour to memory! Thou hast a lifetime of aspiration; give a moment to retrospect! Thou art flying toward the noonday; give a glance backward to the morning! Thou art going forward to meet the seraphim; retrace thy steps one mile to greet Andrew! Thou art eager for thy morrow; have a remembrance of thy yesterday! Thou art pressing toward the ring and the robe, the music and the dancing; but oh, forget not the humble hand that raised thee from the swine!

LXXV

CHRISTIAN UNWORLDLINESS

"In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the cities."—EZEK. xxxvi. 33.

I CAN imagine one exclaiming, "What a lame and impotent conclusion!" We should have expected the words to be, "In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I shall keep you from getting stained any more; I shall place you in a garden far from the madding crowd, far from the temptations of social influence." But it seems an anti-climax to say, "In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I shall cause you to dwell in cities." Is it not the dwelling in cities that has done all the harm! Are we not again and again cautioned to avoid a worldly life, to love not the world nor the things of the world! Yes, but the world is not the city. We are all in a delu-

sion about this matter. We think of worldliness as a life in the crowd. No, it is a life in the solitude—a garden life. To love the world does not mean to love the assembling of ourselves together. It means, to love the separation from our kind, to dwell within our own spirits. Worldliness is selfishness, and selfishness is solitariness. A worldly man or woman is never really social. A worldling is always a monopolist—one who seeks to absorb all the profits. He would absorb the conversation. He would absorb the attention. He would absorb the interest. It is not the social life that makes the worldly life; it is the curtailment of sociality. It is where a woman of fashion aims to be the only fashion that the world has sway. It is where she aspires to be the sole magnet, the one attraction, the form who eclipses every other form—"fair as a star when only one is shining in the sky." This is not city life; it is solitary life, lonely life, unshared life; it is life apart from the crowd. And it is the ideal of what God would have life *not* to be. God is leading us towards a city—a city which hath foundations in the reciprocity of human gifts. He is leading us from the garden to the town, from the individual retreat to the common brotherhood. He is leading us from the silence of the field into the fellowship of the

street, from the meditation into the market-place, from the life of the unit into the life of the universe.

Lead, kindly Light, lead on! Thy leading is not whither I expected; but I follow in faith. I thought Thou hadst come to take me out of the world. I thought I should ascend the Mount and build my tabernacle there. I did not see that this was only Thy morning hour, Thy rising hour. I did not see that Thy midday was in the streets and lanes where the traffic rolls and the people meet. I thought the mountain hour was the unworldly hour. It seemed to me more pious to fast in the wilderness than to serve the wine at Cana. It never struck me that Cana was more sacred than the wilderness. Yet to Cana Thou hast been leading me—to the marriage-feast of human souls. And as I tread the crowded pathway I see that Thou hast led me right. It is in the wilderness that the world and its temptations dwell. My soul's vanity is its solitude. I speak of the giddy height, and truly; the height above the crowd is always giddy. Break my solitude, O Lord! Withdraw me from the world—which is the wilderness! Save me from keeping too much company with myself! Guard me from the vanity of admiring my own loneliness! Protect me from the pride of being pre-eminent! Hide me from the temp-

tations of the *un*social hour! Shield me from the danger of having no boon companions! I shall not regret my expulsion from the garden if thereby I shall find a place in Thy city of human souls.

LXXVI

CHRIST'S CHARITY TO THE WAVERING

"When he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him, and cried with a loud voice, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the most high God! I adjure Thee by God, that Thou torment me not."—MARK v. 6, 7.

WHAT a strange contradiction in conduct! A man is so eager to meet Jesus that he actually runs to Him from a far distance and worships Him as the Son of God! And yet immediately afterwards this same man is distressed by the possibility of contact with the Divine, and would give worlds to get away! How are we to account for this inconsistency! But is it inconsistency? I think not. The man had two lives in him, and each life was consistent with himself; the human personality said one thing, and the foreign spirit said another. We all have these two lives in us as well as the demoniac. We have a life which is all our own and we have a life which has come to us from our ancestors.

Often these lives pull different ways. Often is the one crying, "Jesus, Thou Son of God!" while the other is exclaiming, "I adjure Thee that Thou torment me not!" I have seen a young man of the most noble impulses manifest a genuine horror of Church fellowship. His own impulse was to run to Christ; but there was a tendency in him not his own—a hereditary weakness—the love of alcohol. The cry of the hereditary spirit was opposed to the cry of the *man*. The hereditary spirit felt that, if Christ came in, *it* must go out—go out with a great rending; it dreaded the rending and therefore it deprecated the Christ. But I want to point out that of these two voices Jesus answered the nobler one. He accepted the man in spite of his double cry. He accepted the man although the ignoble voice was the later voice, although the choice of the evil appeared last upon the scene. On what ground could He do that? On one ground only—that there is something in the human soul for which it is not chargeable, not responsible. He looked at the man apart from his surroundings. He separated, in thought, the pure aspirations of the individual soul from the corruptions it had derived from the air; and the verdict He pronounced was this, "The aspiration is the man."

O Lord, I admire and reverence the exceeding kindness of Thy love. How few of us would have accepted such a halting approach! We should all have said, "The last state of the man is worse than the first; we will not let him in." Not so Thou. Thou receivest not only sinners, but what is worse—lapsed Christians. It is not good to be impervious to beauty; but to have seen the beauty and to have then gone back to ugliness—that is sad indeed. Yet even to such Thou hast opened Thy doors, O Lord. Many there be that have run to Thee from afar and yet recoiled from the close pressure of Thy hand. Did I not see them in the Garden with Thee! Couldst Thou have any fellowship with those who could meet Thee in the Garden and shun Thee in the judgment-hall! If they who ran to greet *me* in the morning fled from me at night, I would never speak to them again. But Thou art not like me. Thou hast accepted the first voice as the true voice. Thou hast attributed the after-failure to another spirit—a foreign spirit. Thou hast judged me by my *early* song. My voice hast Thou heard "in the morning," O Lord. Thou hast not measured me by the afternoon—when heart and flesh are weary with the burden and heat of the day. Thou hast taken my trill for

my triumph, my desire for my deed, my will for my work, my cry for my conduct, my flower for my fruit, my dawn for my day, my faith for my following, the sigh of my heart for the service of my hand. Marvellous to me has been Thy mercy, O Lord.

LXXVII

THE ROAD TO COMPANIONSHIP

"Go into the wilderness to meet Moses."—Exod. iv. 27.

THE words were spoken to Aaron. The going into the wilderness is not commonly suggestive of sociality. A wilderness is deemed a lonely place. They who enter it are supposed to be shunted, driven from the presence of their kind, deprived of the means of future usefulness. When the Providence of God calls a man to the metropolis, we feel that there is a fitness in things—that the energies of a human soul have been summoned into an environment where they will receive full play. But when God calls a man into the wilderness—lays him on a bed of sickness or loads him with a heavy burden, we are startled with a sense of incongruity; we say, "To what purpose is this waste!" We should have said so in Aaron's case. God says to him, "Go into the wilderness." I know not in what

form the command came. I should think it took the shape of a moment of physical or mental prostration such as came to Elijah after the excitement of Carmel. If so, Aaron would be an object of general pity; he would be deemed a man whose life was done. His life, in truth, was only beginning; and it was beginning through this seeming loss. When he went out from the world into the wilderness he went right into the arms of his destiny. "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses" was the plan written in heaven. It seems a plan commonplace enough. He had met Moses a thousand times. Moses was his own brother. They had been in constant intercourse; how could this meeting change his destiny? But when we question thus, we forget one thing. A man's destiny seldom turns on the advent of new circumstances. A thing may happen to us a hundred times, and the hundred-and-first may be a crisis. Saul of Tarsus had seen the sun many times; but the sun at Damascus was one *too* many for him. Aaron had met Moses often; but the meeting in the wilderness was to reveal each to the other in a new light. The common participation in a desert experience was to knit their hearts together as they had never been knit before.

Reject not thy wilderness moments, O my soul! Reject not the moments when thy spirit is broken! If the alabaster box had been conscious of its brokenness, it would have said with Judas, "To what purpose is this waste!" Yet it had no fragrance *till* it was broken; the hour of its triumph was the hour of its tragedy; it filled all the house in the act of its impoverishment. So shall it be with thee, O my soul. Never dost thou fill the house of humanity till thou hast had an experience of the wilderness. It is the wilderness that unites thee to thy kind. It is there thou wilt meet, not Moses merely, but all men. Which was more lonely to Jesus—the wilderness of Judæa or the marriage-feast of Cana? I say it was Cana. The wilderness had more promise and more facilities as a place of future rendezvous. Cana is not a place which all visit; but the wilderness is. We have all our moments of joy; but we do not all rejoice in the same thing: thy mountain need not be thy brother's mountain. But thy valley is always thy brother's valley. We do not all label the same things by the name "Happy"; but we all label the same things by the name "Sad"—death, sickness, pain, bereavement, failure, weariness. Not the crown, but the cross, is thy symbol of union.

There are special roads to gladness; there is a common road to grief. Every man has his own Cana; we have all the same Village-of-Nain. The sunshine may *divide* us; the night brings us home. We may be lonely in our light; but we have "fellowship in the mystery." The key into thy brother's heart is the key that has fallen in the mire; thou shalt meet him in thy wilderness, O my soul.

LXXVIII

THE BOUNDARY-LINE OF CHRIST'S COMMUNION

"When Jesus knew it, He withdrew Himself from thence."—MATT. xii. 15.

"WHEN Jesus knew it." Knew what? That the Pharisees had conspired against Him. Whenever He found that a contrary spirit was in the air He withdrew His presence. And verily He was right. There is no hope of revealing anything to an adverse will. That is a barrier to all revelation. I know of hardly any other barrier. How seldom in the Gospel narrative does Christ confess to an impassable obstacle! There are very few circumstances from which *He* withdraws Himself. He does not shrink from speaking to a child. He does not shrink from speaking to a doubter. He does not shrink from speaking to a tempted soul. He has no fear that His voice will not penetrate through the wall which

hides the heart of a Nicodemus or a Thomas or a Magdalene. But He does shrink from an adverse will. That is the reason why He puts the prayer "Thy will be done" before "Lead us not into temptation." If it were definitely announced from heaven that next Sunday every one who attended church should instantaneously be impelled to abandon his evil life, it would be the smallest attendance of the year. Augustine's is no exceptional prayer, "O Lord, convert me—but not yet!" Christ's greatest barrier—the wall from which He is constrained to withdraw—is an adverse will, the wish for something opposite. A revelation can pierce through every thing but one—an opposing interest. That was Christ's heaviest obstacle—the obstacle from which He shrank. Why did He put out the hired mourners before healing the daughter of Jairus? It was because the hired mourners had a contrary interest to Himself. It was His interest that the healing should be rapid; it was theirs that it should be slow. They were paid by the time of their service; it was for their advantage to prolong the household grief. Jesus resented the counter current. He could bear with doubt, He could bear with temptation, He could bear with sin; but with the presence of an adverse sympathy He could not bear.

Lord, I should like to see a membership based on one quality—the will to believe. I would have a preliminary Church gathered for Thee—a Church of those who desire. I would call it Thy Beginners' Church. I would ask from Thy beginners no creed; I would demand from them no confession; I would prescribe for them no catechism. I would only ask the *desire*—the will to believe. I would say, "Enter ye to whom doubt is a burden, to whom the cloud is a calamity—ye who are longing to find rest!" I feel sure, O Lord, that those who thus come Thou wilt in no wise cast out. They will come without credentials, they will come without examination, they will come without maturity; yet they will be received as the bearers of Thy banner. They will have but one watchword, and that watchword will be a wish. They will have no language but a cry, but their cry will be a crown. Thou wilt draw near to them; and the world will wonder. It will wonder to see the Jew asking drink of the Samaritan—the Christ cradled on the bosom of the creedless. But *we* shall not wonder; we shall rejoice to see the star over the manger. We shall claim a wider membership than we claimed yesterday. We shall say, "I belong to the Church of the desiring, to the generation of them that *seek* Thee." Thou wilt welcome

those that wish for Thee; Thou wilt live with those who long for Thee; and Thou wilt not withdraw from those who can subscribe to this one prayer, "O that I knew where I might find Him!"

LXXIX

THE INDIRECT EFFECTS OF CHRISTIANITY

"Behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house."—Ezek. xlvii. 1.

THE healing waters of God's temple are not limited to the inside; they come through the door to the outer world. The idea I take to be that the outer world, the secular world, is to receive an indirect benefit from Messianic times—that even those who do not accept the Messiah are to be affected by His atmosphere. "Thou hast received gifts, even among the rebellious" is the striking statement of a Jewish poet. And it expresses a profound truth regarding the Messiah's kingdom. In one sense that kingdom is confined to a comparatively small number; so far as its actual membership is concerned it is limited in its range. But its influence has gone far beyond its membership;

the waters have issued from under the threshold of the door. The unchristianised India of the twentieth century is in a totally different position from the unchristianised India of the first. And why so? Because Christ is not only the head of the Church but the head of principalities and powers. He has not only regenerated the soul; He has raised the body. He has changed the fashion. He has refined society. He has softened the laws. He has sweetened the manners. He has repressed the power of kings. He has mitigated wars. He has ennobled sacrifice. He has enlarged charity. He has exalted woman. He has beautified the altar of family life. Christ is not only in the creed but in the air. "Of His fulness we have *all* received"—Christian and Pagan, believer and unbeliever, convert and opponent. A lady said to me the other day, "Can you explain how it is that a friend of mine who is an absolute unbeliever lives as if she were a Christian?" I have no difficulty in explaining it. I may put Christ out of my creed; but I cannot put Him out of my atmosphere. I may refuse to hear Him; but I cannot refuse to breathe Him. He meets me on that very road to Damascus where I have gone to persecute Him. I may reject the faith; but I cannot get rid of His face.

O Thou who art the water of life, I thank Thee that Thou art not confined to Thy sanctuary. The streams of Thy river make glad Thy city; but they make glad more than that; they come out into the world of men. I can say of Thee, O Christ, "Whither can I *flee* from Thy presence!" The image of Thy Cross is everywhere. I cannot shut Thee out by closing my Bible. If I go into the market-place, I escape not the sight of Thy great white throne; men in the exchange have learned to judge themselves by Thy standard; their code of commercial honour is based on Thee. If I go into the drawing-room, I cannot escape the sight of Thy throne; all my criticisms on society are answers to the question, What would Jesus do? If I traverse the field of pleasure, I cannot escape the sight of Thy throne; I measure the value of the bread by its power to go round the multitude. Thy Sermon on the Mount rings over my plain. Thy voice at Cana sanctifies my joy. Thine hour in the wilderness illumines my solitude. Thy home at Nazareth kindles my household fire. Thy moments at Bethany bless my friendships. Thy sojourn in Sidon enlarges my charity. Thy visit to the tax-gatherer glorifies my business calling. Thou hast given Thyself to the *Father;* but Thou hast

also paid tribute unto Cæsar—enriched the world as a world. I bless Thee that the waters of Thy life have flowed through the door of the temple into the bosom of the rebellious.

LXXX

NEHEMIAH'S CURE FOR PHYSICAL LANGUOR

"Neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength."—Neh. viii. 10.

THERE is something very suggestive about this passage. Nehemiah is addressing the people. His aim, above all things, is to inspire them to work. A new nation is forming; and a new nation, beyond everything else, requires energy. Nehemiah's advice, therefore, is directed toward energy. What is that advice? What is his recipe for becoming strong? Does he say, "Take plenty of exercise," "Take plenty of food," "Take plenty of fresh air"? None of these is the distinctive precept on which he lays stress. His anxiety points in another direction. He looks round on the multitude and sees a mass of downcast faces. He is afraid of the downcastness; he thinks this will sap their strength more than

will any physical want. Accordingly, it is their depression that he blames. He says, in effect: "You are undermining your physical strength by your pessimism. A strong body is not built by a sad heart. The powerful frame is created by pleasant feelings. If you desire weight to your hand, keep your heart light. If you would avoid weary feet, keep your spirit on the wing. If you would be capable of the burden, keep your soul buoyant. Your force lies in your felicity; your strength is your joy." But observe, Nehemiah qualifies the statement. He does not say that every joy will make a man strong; his words are, "The joy of the *Lord* is your strength." And he is quite right in this limitation. The joy which strengthens must be unselfish joy. I do not think that joy about personal good-fortune is a whit more invigorating to the body than grief for personal loss. They are both weakening. Pope Clement the Seventh died of sorrow for a defeat; but his successor, Leo the Tenth, died of exultation for a victory. Personal excitement, whether through laughter or through tears, paralyses the work of the hour. If in the midst of writing an article you heard that you had come into a great fortune, I do not think you would write a line more that day. But if you heard the same news of one whom

you loved, and whose poverty had given you pain, you would be fanned by an inspiration which would make the pen fly. What marks the difference? It is this—the one is the joy of the flesh; the other is the joy of the Lord.

Lord, set Thy joy before me, Thine impersonal joy, the joy of seeking and saving that which was lost! Nothing else will make me strong enough to endure the cross and despise the shame. I hear Thy voice saying, "Go, work to-day in My vineyard." But my heart is heavy, O Lord, my heart is heavy. I have been losing in the mart of commerce, and the sting of the loss is photographed everywhere. It lends rapidity to the rain, stoniness to the street, weariness to the way. It makes the stairs steeper to climb, the dwellings drearier to visit, the rust and moth more rampant, the panes of the windows more opaque, the dust on the floors more deep, the path of the poor more repelling. What am I to do, O Lord! It is in vain they tell me to do Thy will. I *can* do Thy will; but as long as it is outside of mine I am a weak workman. I want Thy will to be mine, O Lord; I shall be weary in Thy work till I love what Thou lovest. Give me Thy joy in helping the jaded! Give me Thy rapture in saving the ruined! Give me

Thy thrill in appeasing the desert thirst! Shorten lane and alley through my love of the poor! Lessen dust and mire through my devotion to the toiler! Abridge the height of stairs through the fleetness of human sympathy! Conceal repulsive sights through the rainbow in my soul! Hide the gloom of the present through the gladness of the promise! Drown fatigue by fervour; kill enervation by earnestness; disperse weakness by the winds of the Spirit; slay torpor by inward transport; obscure the mean cradle by the coming Christ! My strength will come when I enter into Thy joy.

LXXXI

CHRIST'S FIRST TEMPTATION

"When the tempter came to Him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."—MATT. iv. 3.

WHEN Satan first tempted Christ he tried to make Him a pessimist. He pointed to the scarcity of bread in the world. He suggested to Jesus that a Divine Government would require a radical change in human conditions—that the ordinary provision for man's wants was quite disproportionate to the resources of a benevolent God. Satan always begins by seeking to make us pessimists. It is not in our happy moments that we are most apt to be tempted. It is when the sun is low, when our fortunes are down, when our spirits are depressed. The preliminary step to all temptation is an introduction into the wilderness. And what was this temptation itself? It was the suggestion to abolish all

necessity for work, "Command that these stones be made bread." There is an equality which men have a right to hope for; they are entitled to ask an equal chance of earning their daily sustenance. But the tempter suggests equality by an opposite method. He proposes that all men alike should lose the *need* of earning daily sustenance. He would have the common stones of the quarry transmuted into that sustenance so that life through all its borders might become one unstinted feast. "What a benevolent scheme of philanthropy!" you cry; "why should Satan be such a wondrous friend of man!" But was it benevolent? Imagine for a moment that God granted such a prayer to the human race. For one day it would be hailed as the millennium—flags would be waving, banners would be streaming, every Jerusalem would be strewn with palm-leaves. But to-morrow the shouts would be feebler and the songs less tuneful; the day after, there would be silence; in a week, the palms would wither; in a month, the heart would moan; in the fulness of the years, humanity would faint for want of interests. Love would have none to labour for, pity none to provide for, sympathy none to sigh for, tenderness none to toil for, compassion none to care for, benevolence none to bend for,

graciousness none to give for, kindness none to kindle for, mercy none to mourn for. To make stones into bread would ere long make hearts into stones.

"Strong Son of God, Immortal Love," I thank Thee that Thou hast not made void the charities of man to man. I thank Thee that Thou didst not listen to the tempter when he asked Thee to make the stones bread. If Thou hadst it would no more have been communion bread; we should have gathered it like pebbles and thrown much of it in the sea. I bid a friend to a social repast, and he feels the charm of my hospitality; but that is because it has cost me something. He would not feel it if Thou hadst answered the tempter's prayer—if the bread were as plenteous as stones; for the value of the festive board is the sacrifice which has spread it. I bless Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast left in life doors for me to open. I bless Thee that the stream of manna does not fall from heaven upon our wilderness. I bless Thee that Thou hast caused the stream to flow, not from heaven, but from earth. I praise Thy holy name that Thou hast established human sustenance in man's humanity to man. I magnify that love which has necessitated love. My love would be useless if the stones were bread; let

them rest unchanged in the quarry! But transform my stony *heart*, O Lord! Wake me with the cry of the weary! Stir me with the pulse of the struggling! Pain me with the hunger of the poor! Haunt me with the thought of the homeless! Load me with the burdens of the labouring! Bruise me with the scars of the baffled! Freeze me with the cold of the fireless! Crush me with the woes of the unclad! So shall I make my clouds Thy chariots; so shall my love be perfected in stony places.

LXXXII

CHRISTIAN WITNESS-BEARING

"There was a man sent from God; the same came for witness, to bear witness of the Light."—JOHN i. 6, 7.

A MAN sent from God to bear witness—that was surely a vast machinery for a very trivial end! We could understand a man sent from God to give a revelation. We could understand a man sent from God to make a discovery. We could understand a man sent from God to be a redeemer. But to bear witness to a belief—is not that an easy thing, a thing which any man could do! No; I think it is just the most difficult thing in the world—especially if the belief happens to be unfashionable. If you know a man to be misrepresented by his enemy and if that enemy should be one whom you wish to conciliate, it is very difficult for you to avoid keeping silence; you find it safer not "to bear witness." The sin of society is often

said to be evil-speaking. I do not think so. I think it is failure to speak good. You sit beside one at dinner who descants upon the fault of another. You know that to believe in the fault of that other is a pleasure to him, for he does not like the man. You are quite aware all the time that the allegation is exaggerated. But you would be sorry to lose the opportunity of winning the favour of your companion. He is a man of influence; he can help you; he is worth cultivating. Your resort is therefore to silence. You do not echo his testimony; but you abstain from contradicting it; you mutter something like, "Oh, if that is the case it is very bad!" It is far easier to believe in a thing than to bear witness to a thing. When I was a very young man a lady once said to me with great earnestness, "If you ever find any truth in spiritualism, be sure you do not tell it; it will hurt your ministry with influential people." That advice was typical both of modern and ancient society. Christianity was as unpopular in the first century as spiritualism is in the twentieth. Every heathen mother cried to her converted son, "Don't tell!" His chances of promotion required that he should bow in the temple of Rimmon even while he worshipped Christ in the shrine of his heart.

Witness-bearing was so superhuman a thing that God had to send a man from Himself to do it—had to pour into a human soul a flood of special inspiration that it might witness for the good.

Lord, wherever I see a light in my brother, help me to bear witness to that light! When I hear the world enumerate his dark spots, give me grace to say, "Look at that one white beam"! It will often be my interest to keep silence. My brother may be unpopular with the world—may be even at variance with myself. All the forces within me may conspire for detraction. Truculence may say, "Keep the popular side." Jealousy may say, "You need not eulogise a rival." Sophistry may say, "It is all true about the blame; there is no lie—only the suppression of something." And a deceitful heart may say, "You have no part in it—you are only wearing a veil, only keeping silence." Save me from these seductions, O my God! Help me to say of my brother, my erring brother, my censured brother: "I have seen his star. Night is there, cold is there, ground for solemn thought is there; but I have seen his star. You can point to real shadows, you can tell of true blemishes; but I have seen his star. It is a scene that makes sad, it is a wilderness that

makes weary; but I have seen his star"! Help me to "bear witness" to his star! Let me tell of the light that is looming; let me speak of the red that is rising; let me point to the dawn that is deepening! When men see only his mist, let me sing of his morning! Send me with a leaf from his flood; send me with a dove from his waters! Give me the charity to champion, the bravery to befriend, the pity to protect, the sincerity to shield, the tenderness to be true, the lovingness to be loyal, the courage to be candid, the magnanimity to be merciful, the rectitude to reveal a brother's rainbow! Then shall I know assuredly that I am a witness sent from Thee.

LXXXIII

THE SPHERE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

"The Lord brought an east wind; and, when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts."—Exod. x. 13.

ONE is inclined to ask, Why bring the east wind at all? God was about to send a special providence for the deliverance of His people from Egypt. He was about to inflict the Egyptians with a plague of locusts. The locusts were to be His special providence, the evidence of His supreme power. Why, then, does He not bring the locusts at once! Why evoke the intervention of an east wind! Would it not sound more majestic if it had simply been written, "God sent out a swarm of locusts created for the purpose of setting His people free"! Instead of that, the action of God takes the form of natural law, "The Lord brought an east wind; and, when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts." Why send His message in a common chariot when it might fly on heavenly wings! Is

there not even something disappointing in the words "when it was morning"! Why should God's act have been so long in working the cure! Is not the whole passage an encouragement of men to say, "Oh, it was all done by natural causes"! Yes—and to add, "All natural causes are Divine causes." For, why is this passage written? It is just to tell us that when we see a Divine benefit coming through an east wind, or any other wind, we are not to say that on this account it comes less direct from God. It is just to tell us that when we ask God's help we ought to expect that the answer will be sent through natural channels, through human channels. It is just to tell us that when the actual heavens are silent we are not to say that there is no voice from our Father. We are to seek the answer to our prayers, not in an opening of the sky, not in an angel's wing, not in a mystic trance, but in the seeming accidents of every day—in the meeting with a friend, in the crossing of a street, in the hearing of a sermon, in the reading of a book, in the listening to a song, in the vision of a scene of beauty. We are to live in the solemn expectation that, any day of our lives, the things which environ us may become God's messengers.

Send me that solemn thought, O Lord! Let me look at the objects around me in the light of their possible mission! Let me remember that the most unlikely things may one day become Thy messengers! Let me remember that Job was answered at last out of the very whirlwind which seemed to preclude revelation! When I gaze on plant and tree, may I see them as Thine emissaries! When I touch a human hand, may I feel its Divine mission! When I pay a well-timed visit, let me say, "The Lord has sent me"! When I arrive at a critical moment, forbid that I should cry, "What a lucky chance!" let me claim the coincidence for *Thee!* Let me uncover my head to the meanest flower, to the most fugitive hour, to the most secular power! Let me reverence them in advance—for what they may bring to-morrow! May I forget not that even the east wind became Thy messenger! Help me in the prospect of to-morrow to bless life's east winds! Help me to remember that the rejected stone may be the corner-stone! Help me to bear in mind that the cross may be the crown! Help me to realise that the tidings of Thy peace may come on the tempest's bosom! Teach me that this world is not the veil, but the unveiling, of Thy presence! So shall I feel the sacredness of the common day.

LXXXIV

THE INFLUENCE THAT IS IMMORTAL

"Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh."—Heb. xi. 4.

THERE is only one influence that will speak to all ages; it is sacrifice—the giving up of something in the cause of right. That is the only thing known to me which appeals equally to every generation of men. All other experiences are changed by the years. Manners change; customs change; apparels change; tastes change; ideals of beauty change; the fashion of each successive age passes away. Cain was a great man in his time, Esau was a great man in his time, Saul was a great man in his time; but it cannot be said of any of these, "By that greatness he, being dead, yet speaketh." Nobody would now admire Cain—not even the bad man. Nobody would now admire Esau—not even the selfish man. Nobody would now admire Saul—not even the

vain man. Cain and Esau and Saul do not "speak" to us—do not appeal to us. We do not feel that they are moderns. There is a far-away sound about their voices as if they were talking through a mist; and so they are —the mist of vanished years. But there is one region of the past which is always modern and whose voices do speak to us. There are birds of Eden which sing in modern London, in modern Paris, in modern Rome, and there is no fainting in their song. There are flowers of old Israel which we meet in the gardens of Europe, and there is no fading in their colours. What are these birds of eternal song, what are these flowers of perpetual bloom? They are the sacrifices of the heart. Time writes no wrinkle on the deeds of sacrifice. The ark of the Israelites is worn and old; the shout of the Philistines is far off and feeble. But the love of Jonathan and David is as young as yesterday; the devotion of Ruth to Naomi is as modern as this morning; the affection of Joseph for his brethren is as fresh as an autumn field. The sacrificial spirit belongs to all ages. It annuls the differences of time. On that mount Moses and Elias can speak to Peter and John, and forget the centuries between. They were all sacrificial lives, and therefore time is for them in-

different. The yearnings of the heart make us independent of the years; they speak not to men but to man.

But, my soul, is it only by example that the dead can speak to thee! Have the Abels of the past no actual voice by which they can commune with thee! I think they have—and it is a voice tuned by the spirit of sacrifice. Is it not written of the celestial band, "They are all ministering spirits." If a higher life would speak to thee, it must first bend to thee. Wouldst thou speak to a child, then must thou first empty thyself into the child's experience. Thou must see with his eyes, hear with his ears, move with his feet, think with his mind, feel with his heart. If Elijah comes back in his chariot he must put on his mantle again—the common dress of earthly days. Of all things in this world below, what thinkest thou will be most useful in the world above? I will tell thee—it is thine hours of sacrifice, thy moments of loss. Nothing else will be so valuable yonder—not riches nor honour nor glory. It is thy clouds that are training thee; it is thy burdens that are expanding thee; it is thy times of arrest that are promoting thee. Thou callest them God's silences; they will be the organs of thy speech one day. Thy crosses shall make thee a comforter; thy hardships

shall make thee a helper; thy clouds shall make thee a cleanser. By thy stripes thou shalt strengthen; by thy pains thou shalt pity; by thy falls thou shalt forgive; by thy mists thou shalt minister; by thy battles thou shalt bear; by thy griefs thou shalt guide; by thy days of sorrow thou shalt have doors of sympathy. Thou shalt speak by thy sacrifices, O my soul.

LXXXV

CHRIST'S FIRST NOTE OF AUTO-BIOGRAPHY

"Blessed are the poor in spirit."—MATT. v. 3.

THERE is a question I have often asked myself—Why does St. Matthew bring the Sermon on the Mount so close to the temptation in the wilderness? That is not its natural position; it belongs to a much later stage of Christ's ministry, and could not have been understood in the earliest period. Why, then, does the First Gospel place it in the immediately succeeding chapter to the temptation? I take the reason to be that the first note of this sermon is a reminiscence of our Lord's experience in the wilderness—in other words, it is a note of autobiography. What was the temptation in the wilderness? I would sum it up in four words—"Be conscious of yourself." The tempter said, "If you are the Son of God,

realise that you are such. Let the thought be ever present to your mind. Let your every action be prompted by the motive of showing that you are Divine. Assert yourself in the world. Command that the stones be made bread. Claim the Father's care in a gigantic leap from the pinnacle of the temple. Aspire to the conquest of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." The one thought in all the temptations is the grandeur of self-consciousness. And this is the thought which in the Sermon on the Mount Christ begins by repudiating. It shows what an adverse impression it had made upon His mind. He starts this great sermon by a note of memory—a memory of His own pain. He remembers how bitterly he felt this perversion of the truth. He is determined it shall be the first delusion He will publicly expose, the first error of which He will warn the multitude. Accordingly, He stands in the midst of them and, with an air of almost dramatic abruptness, cries, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!" Read that in the light of the wilderness, and it means this—"The highest power, even heavenly power, comes in moments of unconsciousness." To be poor in spirit is to be unconscious of yourself. It is not "to be humble," "to be despondent," "to be miserable"

—these are all forms of consciousness. It is to forget that you have an eye or ear, a hand or foot, a heart or brain. It is to fly without hearing the movement of your own wings. It is to ignore the flower you wear, to forget the charm you bear, to discount the deed you dare—to see not when you shine, to feel not it is fine, to say not, "Wealth is mine." That is the spirit whose poverty is power.

Lord, only in Thine unconsciousness shall I reach Thy Mount; let me resist the tempter with *Thee!* My wilderness is my consciousness. I say, "If I leap from the pinnacle, I shall prove my trust in God"—and very likely my courage will fail. But if a *friend* fall from the pinnacle, I make an *un*conscious leap—the leap of self-forgetfulness. The world marvels at my courage. It is the want of courage. Love's fear has paralysed me, made me oblivious of myself. Give me, O Christ, that fear which makes oblivious!—it was *Thine.* It is not courage that makes unconscious of peril; it is the fear that is born of love. Why hast Thou trod the hospital of human ills? Was it recklessness of Thy life? No; it was dread for mine. Men say Thou wert steeled by heavenly armour; nay, Thou wert steeled by love's terror. It was my cry made possible Thy Calvary; it was my danger made bearable Thy desert; it was my

groan made endurable Thy Gethsemane. It was my crisis made Thy courage, O Christ. Men exhort me to have the fear of the Lord. They are right. Thy fear is love's fear—the only fear which deadens personal pain. It makes heroes of the helpless, warriors of the weak, soldiers of the sick, lions of the listless, Daniels of the drooping, fortresses of the feeble, champions of little children, youth's morning light of the fulness of years. Lord of the beatitudes, grant me this boon!

LXXXVI

THE SECRET OF STOOPING

"That thou shouldest receive him for ever, not now as a servant, but above a servant."—PHILEM. 15, 16.

PAUL had sent back to his master a runaway slave. The slave had fled to Paul under the belief that the faith which he professed would require the immediate abolition of bondage. Paul knew that society was not ripe for this. What he wanted in the meantime was individual purity, not social revolution. Accordingly, he converted the man and bade him return bearing a letter to his master. In that letter Paul tells the master not to be angry at his temporary loss. He tells him that by this temporary loss he has got a better servant than he ever had before—one who by his runaway escapade has gained an experience which will make him a more valuable helper than in all the days of the past, "more than a servant." The thought opened up by these words is a very

striking one. It was a common view in Paul's day and is hardly less common in our own, that elevation of mind is unfavourable to service—that a man or woman works best in proportion to the want of intelligence. The spread of education has often been deprecated on this ground. Paul felt this to be a delusion. He felt that the higher the man the lower would he stoop in service. And he felt truly. That which makes a man or woman demur to menial work is not a sense of dignity but the want of it. I have seen a youth object to carry a parcel. "A very proud young man" was the common verdict. Mine was "A very humble young man." He must have felt that it would take very little to lower him. A Christian is extremely humble just because he has an extremely strong sense of personal dignity. He has learned that his personal dignity consists in stooping—that the thing which makes him a man is the power of sacrifice. The ability to stoop is the only thing he is proud of; it is the mind that was in Christ Jesus, and therefore the mind of royalty. Paul says that the Christian hope "maketh not ashamed." He does not mean that it makes one feel small, but that it makes one feel big. When a man gets this hope he ceases to believe that any trivial thing can take him down, that any hands soiled in the

service of humanity could for a moment rob him of his lineage from the house of God.

My brother, art thou in need of a service which involves stooping. Do not think it is most likely to be given by an inferior nature! It is not the small mind that best does the humble work. Wouldst thou have one to speak in parables to those who are simple. Do not choose him from their own level; bring him from the height! The teacher of beginners must not be a beginner himself; the master alone can break the bread. Not by companionship with other children does thy child grow. It grows by the talk of those above it. Select its governess from the most accomplished, its schoolmaster from the most learned! Think not that an illiterate sick-nurse is the most helpful with her hands! The hands follow the sympathies, and the sympathies depend on the power of imagination. The true sick-nurse must be a poet; she must figure the scenes she stoops to. Hast thou not read that the Son of Man was "crowned with glory and honour that He should taste death for every man." He stooped by *reason* of His previous glory; He bent because He was beautiful. It will be ever so. Wouldst thou be served, seek not the slave but the seraph! Ask thy help from the hills! Bring thy needs to the noble! Tell thy wants

to the winged angels! Send for thy staff to the stars! Cast thy burden on the beatified Lean thy head on the high! Commit thine errands to the exalted! Heaven will be thy healer. The Son of Man will be thy minister. The crowned heads will bear thy cross. Thy troubles may come from the ground; but it is the men of the sky that will lift them. Seek thine aid from the *heights*, O my soul!

LXXXVII

MAN'S PREMONITION OF CHRISTMAS BELLS

"We have seen His star."—MATT. ii. 2.

THE star was a thing for which Nature had no use. It served no physical purpose. It was superfluous so far as secular need is concerned; there was no place for it in the merely natural sky. That is the reason the wise men believed it to be *super*natural. Its light gave no help to the present world; they said, "It must have a function in some other world." And this is precisely how we reason in our moments of premonition. We see something very beautiful for which we can find no earthly purpose; and we say, "It must have a purpose elsewhere; we have seen the light of an undawned day." What, for example, is the mundane use of poetry! Does it help the development of the world! To the business man it is rather a hindrance; it tends to make

him unpractical. To the schoolboy it is a retardation; it makes him dream when he should be studying; you cannot see the beauties of "Paradise Lost" at the same time that you are parsing it. To the dispenser of charity it is a barrier—real sorrow seems so prosaic compared with ideal sorrow. Whence then has it come—seeing that earthly need has not created it! It is one of the grapes of Eschol. It is not an evolution; it is a premonition. For any time-purpose it might be called a useless organ; but its use is coming. It tells us that we are preparing for something ideal—for a Christ who is "fairer than the children of men," for an "Altogether Lovely," for a presence "without blemish and without spot"; in poetry "we have seen His star." Or, what is the temporal use of remorse for an irremediable past! Measured by the time standard, it is a weakening of energy. Great crimes are punished by law, great vices are put down by society; these are really effective pieces of mechanism. But what purpose is to be served by the gnawing at my heart of a poignant pain for a past which has vanished! There is none now; but it is coming. This gnawing pain is useless here, but it will be satisfied by and by—when my evil shall work out good, when my dark deeds shall open God's door, when the sin that made Christ's Calvary shall

lead up to Olivet. The cry for a reversed past is useless now; but it will be answered in the day when "the wrath of man shall praise" Him; of that day we have seen the star.

I thank thee, O Lord, that there are things in this world which this world does not need. I thank Thee that there are things called unpractical—unusable. It is from these I get my hope; they are my "star." Other things give me earthly riches—the gold and the frankincense and the myrrh; but the star gives me my Christ. My finest treasures are in this world bound in a napkin. My dreams disqualify me, my star-gazing strands me. I seem to be only on the road to a manger—a place where inferior intelligences dwell. So I am, if this world were all. Why hast Thou suffered the boy to see castles in the fire when he ought to be studying his map! Why hast Thou permitted the youth to see stars above his ledger when he ought to be studying his figures! Why hast Thou allowed the maiden to dream of romantic beauties which domestic life will never yield! Why hast Thou caused Matthew to forget the count of his tax-gathering in a vision of loveliness! Why hast Thou made Peter drop his fishing-rod for a call that could bring no bread! Why hast Thou sent Nicodemus a night dream that makes him less successful with the world by day! Oh! it

is all the star—the star of Bethlehem! It is because in the great world to which I go these powers disused of earth will be all the vogue. It is to ripen me for *Thy* riches, to train me for *Thy* treasures, to fit me for *Thy* fulness, to leaven me for *Thy* light. I thank Thee, O Lord, that, amidst the many constellations whose path I can trace, there is revealed to me at moments one orbitless star.

LXXXVIII

THE QUALIFICATION FOR MINISTERING

"Looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him Ephphatha, that is, Be opened."—Mark vii. 34.

SUCH was the state of mind in which Jesus approached an afflicted human soul. It is the typical state of all true philanthropists. It is a double consciousness—a blending of pain and hope. I read that before beginning the cure Jesus "sighed"; that was an experience of pain. But I am told that the sigh was simultaneous with an upward glance, "looking up to heaven"; that was an experience of hope. Can pain and hope exist side by side? Yes, if they form part of one building. And they do so here. They are the two pillars of compassion. No act of charity can be successful without each of them—pain and hope—the sigh and the upward gaze. There can be no charity without the sigh. The sigh is the breath of sympathy. You cannot heal a man by merely being sorry

for him; you must be sorry *with* him. Sympathy is not sorrow for, but sorrow with. What does Paul mean when he says, "I am crucified together with Christ"? He means that the cross of Christ has become his own cross. Sympathy in its deepest sense is an obliteration of separate personalities; it makes me live in your experience; I do not so much heave a sigh for you as heave your sigh. Until I can do that, I can be no missionary to you; I must appropriate your pain if I would relieve you. But there is something more which is wanted for charity than the sigh. I cannot help you by merely feeling your pain. Pity is a great power, but it is not the greatest power. The greatest power is hope. There must be the upward glance as well as the downward bending. Jesus is sighing over a deaf man; but what makes Him sigh? It is because the man ought *not* to be deaf. It is because deafness is not the normal state of any man. This sufferer was meant to hear music, to listen to human voices, to express the tones which the heart loves so well. Jesus felt he was worthy of better things; therefore He looked up when He healed him. He would not have looked up if He had been bending over a stone. A stone is also deaf, but it is normally deaf; it was never made to catch the sounds of music, and therefore its state awakes no sigh.

But the *man* was in *want* of something—something which he ought to have. He had been denuded of his birthright. He was knocking at a barred gate of his own being. He was beating at a closed door of the nature which God had given him. Is it wonderful that Christ should have cried, "Be thou opened!"—is it wonderful He should have looked up with the expectancy of hope!

Lord, I need the sight as well as the sigh. If I am to serve my afflicted brother I must have, not only the night, but the star. It is not enough that I feel my brother to be a clod of the valley, irresponsive to the sights and sounds of spiritual beauty; *that* will not cause me to help him. The clod of the valley has no *claim* to be responsive; it is its *nature* to be dead. I must be made to feel that my brother has a life below the clod, a life which the clod is pressing down, a life which struggles to be free. That, O my Father, must be the ground of my compassion, of my humanity to man. Not by the sense of my brother's sin shall I say, "Let there be light!" Show me the budding of a flower, yea, the place where a flower should have been! Let me see that this is not his rest, not his goal! Send me the voice of his unuttered speech, the prayer of his unconscious heart! Send me a sight of the wastes which his world cannot fill;

send me a sense of the hunger which his swine-husks cannot satisfy! Send me a touch of the thirst which his pleasures cannot appease! Send me a hint of the home-sickness which makes him fast mid sumptuous fare! Send me a message of the memories which mock his present hour! Show me the song that sings in his silence, the robe revealed in his rags, the majesty moving in his mean attire! When I am able to look up amid the sigh I shall heal the drooping heart.

LXXXIX

THE ABUSE OF NOBLE THINGS

"If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"—MATT. vi. 23.

I THINK the darkness of which our Lord speaks means the difficulty of seeing sin. I understand Him to mean that it is never so difficult to see sin as when it comes from something really good in the man. There are vices which come from an evil nature; these are at once detected and condemned. But there are vices which originate in the very goodness of the soul. How many a young man is led astray by his generous impulses! He takes to the winecup, not from any love of the wine, but from the sheer love of fellowship. He exceeds in his potations, not to pamper himself, but to keep up the good cheer of others. He says more than he means, not because he is deceitful, but because he wants to make people happy. He gives promises in

advance of his ability, not from any weakness of principle, but just because the warm impulse of the moment is too strong for him. The poet speaks of being led astray by a light from heaven. That is what Christ means by the light within a man being darkness. He means that a colder nature would commit fewer lapses in righteousness. But He says also that, just because the young man's sin comes from something noble in his nature, it is specially difficult for his friends, or even for himself, to detect it. The light from which it proceeds obscures it, hides it, darkens it. Nothing, says Jesus, veils sin from our sight like its origination in brilliant qualities. The man's comrades actually imitate his faults. If they saw in the street a degraded drunken creature, worn in limb and tattered in garment, they would say, "What a terrible thing is this human iniquity!" But when they see a brilliant youth heated into extra lustre and made to sparkle with adventitious fire, when they see his natural good-nature enhanced and his genial glow made ruddier, then misery is cloaked in light and vice gets a temple in the soul. It is hard for a man to detect his brother's sin when it is wreathed round one of the gifts of God.

Lord, thy psalmist has said, "Cleanse me

from secret faults!"—faults in the dark. My secret faults are the faults which come from my virtues; cleanse me from *these*, O Lord! Thou hast set many lights in the upper chamber; may they never lead me wrong! Thou hast given me a power of satire to lash what is mean; let me never use it on the sensitive heart! Thou hast given me a power of manner to greet a friend; let me never thereby deceive the soul of innocence! Thou hast given me a love of companionship; let it never launch me into perilous depths! Thou hast given me a little mirror called self-respect that I may keep all stain from my attire; let it never degenerate into pride of heart! I would not have sin enter by the *front* door—by the very pillars of my house. I would not have my *gems* tarnished, whatever else be tarnished. Let not my *light* be the darkness! Keep the stain from my star! Let me blight not by my bloom, ruffle not by my rose, wound not by my wealth, slay not by my song, corrupt not by my courage, tempt not by my tenderness, beguile not by my beauty, debase not by my devotion, lower not by my love! The lights which come from Thee should be lights to Paradise; let them not lead me into temptation, O Lord!

XC

THE PRINCIPLE OF CHRIST'S PHILANTHROPY

"I have no man to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me."—JOHN v. 7.

THESE words were spoken by the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda. The meeting of Christ and that impotent man was the meeting of the old world and the new. Two opposite systems of evolution stood side by side—the one which was setting and the one which was rising. The one was the crushing of the impotent; the other was the selection of the impotent. The one was the survival of the strong; the other was the preservation of the weak. The one would support only those who gave room for hope; the other sought out those whom the world had resigned in despair. This lame man was a victim to the *old* system. He was overlooked by pity because his malady was desperate.

Stronger men got in before him. If he had possessed more power of motion, he would have been sooner healed; but men who were less ill received a privilege just because they were less ill. This was in real accord with the spirit of the ancient *régime*. Rome and Jerusalem alike put their most impotent men last in the roll for charity. Rome held them to be the enemies of the State, Jerusalem the enemies of God. This man was cured by change of air—change of civilisation. Nothing else could have cured him. As long as he remained in the old atmosphere he would have remained outside the healing pool. But he had come into a new atmosphere—the atmosphere of Jesus. The change was a change of ideal. The motto of the ancient *régime* had been, "Rescue the promising"; the motto of the new age was to be, "Rescue the perishing." A man used to say to his God, "Pardon mine iniquity because it is trivial"; he was now with the prophetic psalmist to cry, "Pardon mine iniquity because it is great." He used to say, "Pity me, for I have not been wholly to blame"; he was now to cry, "Save me for Thy mercy's sake." He used to say, "Choose me, for I am strong"; he was now to cry, "Accept me, for I am weak." And his cry to man has changed like his cry to God.

When he prays his brother to help him into the pool, he does so on the ground of his impotence. Christ's charity begins with the lowest room. It goes first to Galilee—to the region of the shadow of death. It bathes with the water of life him who is too feeble to reach the earthly pool. It brings its earliest treasures from the tomb, its diamond trophies from the dust, its golden jewels from the ground; it seeks first the impotent man.

Lord, Thou hast created a new attraction in my soul—the attraction to deformity. I had always the attraction toward beauty. I admired Nature's vastness in India and her manifoldness in Greece. I admired Hellenic loveliness and Roman strength and Babylonian riches. I even admired weakness where it was coupled with successful effort—as where little Israel stood against the nations of the world and left an impress on history stronger than they. But I shrank from the sight of that which was hopelessly unsymmetrical. I would have had it buried out of my sight, sunk fathoms down in the depths of the sea. I put the lepers outside the gate, the demoniacs amid the tombs. I exterminated the defective in form; I annihilated the feeble in frame. I left homeless children on the highway; I exposed blighted infants to the blast.

I had no mansion in my house for the maimed, no place in my field for the paralytic, no room in my world for the ruined. But *Thou* camest, and the scene was transformed. Thou camest, and the hopeless were proclaimed the qualified. Thou camest, and the watchword was "the rising of the dead." Thou camest, and the weakest were the most eligible, the humblest the most acceptable, the lowest the most likely. Thou camest, and it was the blind who caught the beam, the lame who began to leap, the weary who furthest walked, the sick who heard the song, the laden who felt the lightness, the broken who stood the breeze, the rejected of earth who found the radiance of heaven. Those excluded from Bethesda were they whom Thou first beatified; let me stand in the new air with *Thee!*

XCI

THE COMFORT OF RELIGIOUS DEPRESSION

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul?"—Psa. xlii. 5.

THE Psalmist's question is one of real surprise. He is unable to account for his own experience. If it had been a case of primal awakening to the sense of sin, he would not have wondered at his despondency. But the mystery lay in the fact that his depression was not merely a downcastness but a casting down. He had been already *up*—summering in the heights of glory. He had entered into the joy of the Lord. He had gone up to God's house with the voice of gladness; the hour of Divine worship had been to him the experience of a holiday. And all at once the collapse had come. Without seeming reason, with no fault of his own, there had followed a fall—a fall in spirits, a fall of energy. He had not been shaken in his belief;

his sight of the Promised Land was not less clear; he had the full confidence that all things would yet be right. Nevertheless, spite of his faith, spite of his earnestness, spite of his freedom from blame, there had come to him a pause in the glory, an unaccountable Divine silence; and in astonishment he asked, Why? We ask the question with him, for we have felt the same. Why should my spirit be allowed to subside from its own soaring? Why should a cloud be suffered to rest on that hill-top which yester morn was gleaming in the sun? It is because there are higher hills to climb and wider fields to survey. God sends a cloud, not to arrest, but to stimulate, my progress. He would not have me remain in any single room of His ample house; He would lead me through all its many mansions. As I enter each room I am dazzled; I say, "I shall make this my tabernacle, I shall travel no more." Then He darkens the windows and dims the glory. He does not want me to linger there—in a mere fragment of the building. He wants me to see the whole house, because I am the heir and ought to know my property. He first enchants me and then He disenchants me. Is not His disenchantment also good! Is it not well to eclipse imperfect glories! If I am permanently enamoured of the ladder's first step, I shall never go further up. Is it not well that I

should cease to be enamoured—that reaction should come, that weariness should come, that spiritual hunger and thirst should come! How otherwise shall I see *all* the parts of my Father's house!

Lord, I have been in a great error about my despondent moments. I have thought them the index of a fall; and, all the time, they have been the prognostics of a rise. I thought my sin was again gaining dominion over me; and, all the time, my shadow came from Thee. Often in the hour of prosperity I have said, "I am basking in Thy favour"; often in the downcastness of my spirit I have cried, "It is the experience of Thy frown." Yet the downcastness may be a greater proof of Thy favour than the sunshine. When Thou hast furnished a higher room for me Thou sendest a shadow over the lower; Thou dimmest my former joy. I can see no material cause for the dimness. The room has been as carefully swept. The furniture has not lost its varnish. There is no change in the outer environment—the street is as quiet, the sun as bright, as yesterday. But the old joy is not there; in surprise I cry, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul!" Let my comfort be that *Thou* art the cause, O Lord! If it comes not from moth and rust, if it comes not from street and lane, I know it must come from Thee. Let me take it as a

gift—Thy gift! Let me receive it as a call—Thy call! Let me hail it as a voice of promotion summoning me up the golden stair! Let me welcome it as Thy message, "Come up higher"! Let me translate it from the language of earth into this language of heaven—"Arise and depart, for this is not your rest; there remaineth for you a more commodious room"!

XCII

THE ROOT OF CHRISTIAN ABNEGATION

"He said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?"—LUKE v. 34.

IT is a curious question how the idea of fasting came to be associated with religion. I take the reason to be that every religion involves sacrifice. But where the error lies is in the belief that the root of sacrifice is pain. The root of sacrifice is joy. Examine the sacrifices that men make in this world. You will find that those who make them are enduring the cross and despising the shame for a joy that is set before them. Ask the artist if he considers himself to be fasting when he scorns delights and lives laborious days. He will tell you, "No, I abstain by reason of my satisfiedness; my mind is filled with a picture, and I have no appetite for a repast." Ask the merchant why he spends so many hours without food. He will

tell you it is precisely because he does not feel the fast—because another fulness makes him unconscious of it. Ask a pair of lovers why they sit out in the wet without even an umbrella, endangering thereby the health of their own bodies. They will tell you that they never knew it was raining at all, that the discomfort of the body was blunted by the comfort of the soul. And this explains the seeming contradiction in Christianity. On the one hand Christ tells us to take up His cross ; on the other He bids us enter into His joy. How reconcile these precepts? Very easily. No man can successfully take up a cross until he has entered into a joy. I bear my cross for something or for somebody. I bear my Christian cross for the sake of the bridegroom. I am never so far from fasting as in that moment of sacrifice. My fast would begin if something *prevented* me from taking up that cross. That is what I understand Christ to mean when He says, " I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am straitened until it be accomplished ! " He wanted to get all His burden at once ; He was hungry for want of it. All the world was keeping Him from the service of His love. It wanted to make Him a king, to crown Him with temporal glory. It was as if you tied the wings of a bird. His love hungered for humiliation, sighed for surrender, panted for

expression, longed for lavishment, thirsted to wear its object's thorn. His meat and His drink was to do the will of His Father.

Lord, give me the root of sacrifice—fill me with love! I cannot sacrifice if life is to me a poor thing; not from my fasting but from my fulness comes my power to give. I cannot toil for the sake of toil; I must have dance-music. I thank Thee that there is so much dance-music in the world. My hand would long since have been paralysed if my heart did not beat time to it. I have often wondered that it was in Thy moment of greatest joy the men on the mount spake of Thy decease to be accomplished. I do not wonder now; the "law of the spirit of life" has explained it. Thy sacrifice came from Thy heart's glow, not from its ashes. Is it not written that of Thy *fulness* we have all received! It is not Thy emptiness that has made us rich, O Christ; it is Thy fulness—the joy of Thy love. I too would tread that royal way. Hast Thou for me some arduous work in store. Not by a fast, but by a feast, do Thou prepare me! Bring me up to the hill-top ere I travel through the hollows! Flood me with the sunshine ere I move to the sacrifice! Fan me with the breezes ere I face the burden! Cheer me with the song ere I meet the silence! Make me rich in love that I may lose myself! Show me life's splendour

that I may spend myself! Put a crown on my head that I may bear a cross in my heart! Fill me with hope, and I shall endure hardness. Tell me man's value, and I shall brave the vale. It is they who see the kingdom that are poor in spirit, for it is the optimist that is the offerer, and he who breasts the gloom is he who beholds the glory.

XCIII

THE STAGES OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

"Holy, harmless, undefiled."—Heb. vii. 26.

I DO not look upon these words as meaning the same thing. I think they stand in a designed order and mark distinct stages of development. I believe that the course of a pure life must always be in three successive steps—holiness, harmlessness, undefiledness. It begins with holiness—the purity of the individual soul. It is that grace of God which dwells within the silent heart—the peace which comes from communing with the Father of spirits. Then there comes a second stage—harmlessness. It might seem more prosaic than holiness, but it is not. Holiness may exist in solitude; harmlessness demands companionship. Holiness belongs to the garden; harmlessness is for the city. Holiness refuses to eat the apple; harmlessness refuses to tempt

Adam to eat. At last there dawns a final stage which leaves harmlessness itself behind; it is undefiledness. To be undefiled also demands companionship; it implies the meeting with corruption. But it is a more complete conquest of corruption than is harmlessness. Harmlessness is only the refusal to do wrong; but undefiledness is the insistence to do right. To be undefiled is to touch the world's pollution and remain pure, to touch the sinner's stain and remain sinless. It is the climax of all holiness, the summer of the soul. Beautiful is the whiteness of the untempted heart; more beautiful still is the whiteness that can turn from the miry clay; but methinks the whiteness most beautiful of all is that which can touch the clay and keep the fleece undimmed.

Son of Man, this whiteness was Thine. Three times I see the curtain raised, and each reveals a phase of Thy beauty. At first Thou art the holy child Jesus, growing up in the home of Nazareth, nourished in the temple of Thy Father. Then I see a change—the hour of temptation comes. Thou passest from the home into the wilderness—from spontaneous virtue to tried virtue. The world tempts Thee to do wrong; but Thou refrainest Thy hand from evil. Thou refusest the bread of selfishness; Thou avoidest the leap of recklessness; Thou

abjurest the prize of covetousness—inward holiness has flowered into social harmlessness. But I see Thee, once more, wearing a flower more beauteous still—undefiledness. It is a great thing to be in the world and do no wrong; but it is a greater thing to be in the world and bloom. A plant may fail to poison which yet may have lost its beauty. Thou hast kept Thy best wine to the last. In Nazareth Thou wert inwardly holy; in the wilderness Thou wert outwardly harmless; but Thy third hour is the grandest—in Thy contact with the sinner Thou wert stainless, "undefiled." All life pressed on Thee. Lepers thronged Thee, demoniacs touched Thee, outcasts waited on Thee; but they breathed not on Thy bloom. It is a glorious thing to be morally harmless; but it is more glorious to be morally unharmed. I should like to bask, O Lord, in this Thy final glory. I may be untempted in the hour of solitude; I may fly from temptation in the hour of companionship; but Thy climax surpassed both of these—it was, to *meet* the hour of temptation and be unsullied still. Raise me to that climax, O Christ! The purity of the untried heart is not enough for me. The restraint of the tied hand is not enough for me. I want my heart to see the world; I want my hand to touch the world. I would

be unrestrained and yet stainless. I would walk through the cornfields and yet keep Thy Sabbath. I would join the feast of Cana and yet keep Thy Sacrament. I would tread the coasts of Sidon and yet love Thine Israel. I would touch the cloud and be clear. I would bear the load and be light. I would meet the sinner and be saintly. I would lift the fallen and be fadeless. I shall reach Thy summer glory when I can meet sin with garments undefiled.

XCIV

WHY GOD VALUES PRAISE

"In God will I praise His word; in the Lord will I praise His word."—Psa. lv. 10.

BEFORE you can appreciate the words of any being, you require to be a partaker of his spirit. That is a principle of universal application. It is as true of every book as of the Bible. It is often said that in studying the work of any author we should be thoroughly unbiassed. That is impossible. The first condition of all criticism, as it seems to me, is that the mind of the reader should be biassed in favour of the subject. If you put a volume of poems into the hands of a critic whose taste is essentially prosaic, he will see no beauty that he can desire in it. It would be quite correct to say, "In Tennyson shall I praise Tennyson." It is to a hundred mute inglorious Tennysons that the great poet is indebted for his praise; and his own

satisfaction must have been the knowledge that there were so many in the world who shared his spirit. Now, the Psalmist suggests that this community of spirit is that which makes God delight in His own praise. He says, "No man could praise God unless God were in him; no man could appreciate His words unless His spirit were already a part of his life." I read lately in an atheistic tract a sentence to this effect, "Why should the omnipotent God be so weak as to be flattered by the praise of His creatures!" He is not flattered; He is gratified. He is unconscious of any benefit to Himself; but He sees a symptom of development in His children. He feels that His solitude is broken, that kindred spirits have arisen to share His nature. What a man praises either in God or his brother is an indication of the height which he has himself attained. He may be far behind in achievement; he may be far behind in life. But his praise is the measure of him. It predicts his coming glory. It tells what he will be to-morrow. It is the primrose of his year. The cold may be still around him; his environment may be yet barren and bare. But the primrose—the putting forth of his admiration—shows that summer is on the way, and that ere long the land will be laden with fruits and flowers.

That is why the heart of the heavenly Father rejoices in the creature's praise. It is a sign that His child is growing—growing into sympathy with a Father's mind, growing into fellowship with a Father's heart. God's joy in praise is a paternal joy.

O Thou that fillest eternity with Thy glories, my praise can add nothing to Thee. When I break into raptures over Thy word, it contributes nothing to Thy name. But it contributes largely to mine. My praise is the swallow that tells of my summer. Receive the song of my swallow, O Lord! Not for itself do Thou receive it, but for the summer which it sings! I do not *live up* to my praise; the world says I am an inconsistent man. But that is because the dove reaches the shore while the ark is still struggling with the waters. My dove of praise is gone out from the ark ere anything else can go out; it is the first thing that has seen the dry land appear. Receive it as it lights upon the ground! Receive it though it comes alone! It is only a voice of admiration—a cry to be like Thee, a wish to be better than I am. Yet to Thee it is a messenger of joy because a prophecy of June. Thou imputest the leafage of June to my April hours. Thou hearest but a voice crying in a wilderness; yet Thou seest Thy

Christ coming up behind it. It is the coming Christ that makes the voice of praise so dear. Thou findest Thy Spirit in my song. Thou readest Thy peace in my pean. Thou hearest Thy commandments in my cry. Thou seest Thy will in my wish. Thou discernest Thy bloom in my bud. Thou beholdest Thy life in my love. The moment I say, "Thou art Divine," Thy heart responds, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto thee, but thy Father."

XCV

THE CHANGED STANDARD OF SOCIAL DIGNITY

"None might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth."—ESTHER iv. 2.

THAT is a true picture of the old world. It is not that the old world was a bad world. It is not that it was inhumane to the men and women who are clothed in sackcloth. It was quite ready to provide for these; the one restriction was that they should not enter the king's gate. The old world had places for its poor; but they were places apart. The kings of the earth threw their largesses to the crass multitude from the chariot sweeping by; but the chariot did sweep by. There might be *gifts* from Belgravia; but there could be no communion. A lazar-house was provided for the leper; but the joyous came not near it. A hospital was provided for the sick; but they who gave their money gave not their

company. The rich might send charities to the needy; but they sent them—they did not bring them. They commissioned their *slaves* to do the menial thing, to touch the unclean thing; none clothed in sackcloth could enter the king's gate. Men believed they were honouring the king by not permitting him to touch the sackcloth. Kingliness was deemed the opposite of burdenedness. Royalty must be at rest. Majesty must live in music. Sovereignty must bask in sunshine. Power must be unperturbed by feeling. Supreme will must never be weighted. The crown must be too high for its wearer to touch the cross. And because this was the view held of earthly kinghood, it was the view held of the King of heaven—a man's heaven is but his earth in the air. The man of that day thought it glorious that a human king should touch no sackcloth; therefore he thought such immunity the glory of the King of Kings. The Ruler of heaven and earth must dwell apart from tears. He must give His *angels* charge of the needy; He Himself must be curtained from their cry. No cloud must come near Him. No mist must environ Him. No voice of human storm must penetrate the secret of His pavilion. None that wore the sackcloth must unbar the portals of the sacred temple.

I thank Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast taught us a new ideal of royalty—a reversed ideal of royalty. I thank Thee that the mission of the king is, now, to *wear* the sackcloth of his people. I thank Thee that it is no longer Divine to be tearless, Almighty to be unable to bear clouds. I bless Thee that there has been revealed a higher joy of royalty than being clothed in imperial purple and faring sumptuously every day—the joy of ministering to a people's pain. No more do we look for Thee in the secret of Thy pavilion. Thou art not there, O Lord. Thou art out in the storm of life where the ship is tossing. Thou art down in the vale of life where the soul is weeping. Thou art treading the plain of life where the hand is struggling. Thou art at Bethany with the bereaved, at Sychar with the seeking, at Tiberias with the toiling, at Sidon with the supplicating, at Bethesda with the broken, at Golgotha with the guilty. Thou comest with clouds; wherever the clouds come, Thou art there. Where the night is, Thou art nigh; where the want is, Thou art waiting. Thou treadest in the path of my tears; Thou sittest by the bed of my sickness. My sackcloth has become my royal symbol—my raiment fit for meeting Thee. None can enter Thy gate who is *not* clothed in sackcloth. There stand

the poor in spirit, the meek, the thirsting! There stand the mourners for the past and the hungering for the future! There stand the labouring and the laden, the restless and the homeless, the footsore and the weary! Humility is the wing that soars to Thee; lowliness is the garb we wear for Thee; conscious guilt is the flower wherewith we adorn for Thee. It is the recognition of our own rags that is the warrant for our coming; therefore it is that we enter Thy gates with praise.

XCVI

THE RELATION OF TEMPORAL TO SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

"Thou gavest also Thy good Spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not Thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst."—NEH. ix. 20.

THIS strikes me as a rather peculiar order in which to arrange the mercies of God. When we recount the Divine benefits we usually begin with the external and end with the spiritual—on the principle that the best should be kept to the last. We thank God for the beauty of the earth, for the glory of sea and sky, for the blessings of daily sustenance and the supply of hourly need; and then we praise Him for the richer gifts of *mind*—for reason, imagination, faith, hope, love. But here there is a reversal of the order; Nehemiah begins by praising God for the gift of the Spirit, and ends by acknowledging His provision for human hunger and

thirst. Why is this? We should expect Israel to be an external nation—fond of temporal riches, eager for earthly joy; why reverse her natural character by putting the spirit before the flesh! I answer, She has not reversed it; it is for the *sake* of temporal joy that she has put the spirit before the flesh. In her experience she has made a discovery. She has found that no outward thing will delight the soul unless the soul is disposed to be delighted—that it is vain to say, "Let there be light," "Let there be a firmament," "Let there be herb and plant and tree," unless the Spirit has begun to move on the face of the waters. We greatly mistake the source of that value which the Bible puts on the soul. We think it lies in the disparagement of earthly objects. It consists in the reverse—the appreciation of earthly objects. It is because the Bible wants man to enjoy earth more that it bids him begin by cultivating the spirit. Is it not a fact of experience that nearly all the pleasures we attribute to the flesh are pleasures of the spirit. Will the trees of Eden charm the troubled heart; will the fruits of Eden tempt the fretted soul! Is digestion helped by downcastness; is the bird's carol heard by care! Society palls upon the

sad. Music jars upon the miserable. Walking fatigues the mentally weary. Beauty repels the inwardly burdened. The grapes of Eschol are only luscious to the glad. Of the things of earth as much as the things of heaven might Paul have said, "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit."

Lord, there are words of Thine on which I have often pondered and pondered wrongly—"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul!" I have understood Thee to say, "What shall it profit thee to enjoy earth and lose heaven!" Nay, my Father, not such is Thy meaning. Rather Thy words are these: "What joy on *earth* canst thou have if thou hast lost thy soul—yea, even shouldst thou gain the whole world! If earth were poured into thy bosom, it would be meaningless without thy soul. What would the fields be without thy refined feeling, the woods without thine inward wealth, the grass without thy spirit's greeting!" That is Thy message, O Lord, and it is a message for earth. I often say, "Send me Thy Spirit to prepare me for the world above!" But I need it likewise to prepare me for the world in which I dwell. Therefore in future I shall also say, "Prepare me for this present

scene, O Lord!" Send me Thy Spirit to make me ripe for the world of daily life! Fill me with grace that I may enjoy the passing hour! Gladden me within that I may revel in the sunshine! Light my heart that the flowers may be luminous! Increase my faith so that trifles may not fright me; burnish my hope so that tempests may not blight me; intensify my love so that clouds may not benight me! Put eternity in my heart so that I step bravely through the courts of time! I shall be ripe for earth when I am ready for heaven.

XCVII

FESTIVITY UNDER CHRISTIAN AUSPICES

"And both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage."—JOHN ii. 2.

I UNDERSTAND this to mean that Jesus was bidden officially—not as an individual but as the founder of a religion. If it had merely been said, "Jesus was bidden," it would have implied that He was invited simply as a private guest. But when it is said that He was asked along with His disciples, private guestship is put out of the question; it is not the invitation issued to a man—it is the homage paid to a principle. Let me illustrate what I mean. When you issue the invitations to a ball, you are influenced by personal reasons. You are not committing yourself to any policy; you are simply expressing your liking for certain individuals. But when you

intend that this ball shall be on behalf of the Samaritan Hospital, the Consumptive Hospital, the Fever Hospital—when you say that the proceeds shall be given to the Royal Infirmary, the Orphanage Home, the House of Refuge—you have bidden to your gathering not a man but a cause, not a person but a principle. You have asked *Christ* to attend, and even Him you have asked in a particular relation—not as the son of Mary, not as the brother of James, not as the friend of well-known families in Galilee, but as the head of a School, as the teacher of disciples, as the fountain and source of a particular charity which you desire to make the interest of your life. Now, that is the case here. There were many at that feast invited from pure friendship—from being members of special families. But Jesus was invited because He was *not* the member of a special family—because He had in Him the blood of all men. He was invited as the symbol of human sympathy, as the sign of universal brotherhood. By numbering Him among his guests the master of the feast meant to say, "I dedicate this banquet to the fellowship of man with man. I put it under the auspices of the spirit of charity. I desire it

to be a feast of goodwill—a monument to the sympathetic marriage of all souls. May those who frequent it be inspired to pray for the multitude in the desert! May those who enjoy it remember the sheep who are not of this fold! May those who give thanks for it breathe also the prayer, 'Give others this day their daily bread'! May our feast be a communion of the spirit—not only with the guests at the table, but with those whose table is spread in the wilderness or whose table is not spread at all! May the presence of the sacrificial Christ suffuse and sanctify our joy!"

Lord, I would put every pleasure under the auspices of Thy Cross. I would write on every joy, "In behalf of Jesus." I would invite Thee to every projected feast. I do not mean that I would go desiring to be unhappy, but that I would go desiring to share my happiness. I would have my joy to be a means, not an end. I would ask my soul if there are any in the room who participate not, who are crushed and weary, who are present in body but absent in spirit. I would ask if the laugh be an expression or the veil of an expression—the revealing of a spontaneous gladness or the restraint of a spontaneous grief. I

would mark the *unwatered* flowers in the garden of pleasure. I would give a hand to the men and women who are shunted at the festive gathering, who are little known and still less regarded. I would have a word for the stranger without introduction, for the maiden without chaperon, for the youth without companion. I would have a smile of welcome for the guest sitting under a shadow, for the man who carries on his garment the traces of a stain and from whose contact surrounding garments are withdrawn. I would link myself with him. I would remember how at Jordan's waters the Son of Man was bathed with sinners. I too would take the lower room. I would give my company to the unclassed, my fellowship to the faded, my recognition to the robeless, my name to the neglected, my salute to the spurned, my patronage to those whom the other guests have passed by. And if any one should ask me, "Why sittest thou in the places of the unpretentious?" I would point to the title of the banquet and say, "It is a feast under the auspices of Jesus."

XCVIII

THE MINISTRATION OF THE PHYSICAL TO FAITH

"Beautiful for situation is Mount Zion."—Psa. xlviii. 2.

I DO not know in the whole Bible a passage exactly like this. It is the only passage within my memory in which the Bible makes a direct appeal to the sense of physical beauty for its own sake. Generally, Nature is viewed only as the vehicle of *God;* here, it stands for itself and is accorded an independent place as a religious educator. At first, indeed, such words in Scripture sound like an anti-climax. Mount Zion was full of the holiest associations—of memories that were sacramental, of influences that inspired the breath of heaven. Does it not seem a strange thing that amid these sacred qualifications there should be introduced a fact so earthly, so mundane, so physical. "Beautiful for situation." Fancy a

preacher inviting one to worship in a particular house of God for such a reason as that! And yet the psalmist is right. The presence of physical beauty helps worship. All emotion is quickened by environment. Even creative imagination is. The poet may construct a new world; but he will do it better under the stars of heaven than under the roof of a garret. It is easier to be good in a garden than in a hovel. It is easier to love God on the mountain peak than amid the dens of human poverty. It is easier to think of heaven where myriad voices roll their music than where the sounds of wrangling greet the ear. Why do you bring a flower to the hospital? If you want to teach resignation to an invalid, would not the text or the tract be a better medium than the painted garniture that meets the eye? No; for you can only teach resignation by entering the mind at a side door—by directing the thought to something else. A man accepts his pain, not by reflecting on it, but by reflecting on other things. The tract bids me be patient; the flower bids me forget. The tract suggests lying down; the flower prophesies springing up. The tract reminds me of my impotence; the flower reveals the glory of lesser things than I. The tract speaks of God's supernatural

will; the flower tells of God's supernatural love. The tract says, "Look into your heart and be humble"; the flower cries, "Look out on the fields and be glad."

Lord, I have often asked myself, Why didst Thou lead the multitude up to the top of a mountain before preaching to them Thy wondrous sermon? Was it not a waste of time to postpone the teaching till the hill was climbed? It would have been if the hill-top had not been a helper of the teaching. But Thou, who knewest our frame, knewest the power of physical beauty. It was not for nothing Thou didst first cause them to climb. The summit was beautiful in situation; it was gladdening to the eye. And because it was gladdening to the eye, it was sought by Thee as the first educator. Thou wouldst not begin with a sermon even from Thine own lips. To Thee the earliest thing was that the multitude should be cheered. Ere ever they received advice Thou wouldst have them to receive joy. I doubt not that before they climbed they were a sorrowing multitude. I doubt not that they were struggling for survival—that they understood what it was to be poor, to be mourning, to be hungry. They were the men of life's infirmary, and as such Thou didst address them. But Thy first

address was the pointing to a flower. Ere ever Thy lips were opened Thou didst lead them to the summit of the hill and allow them to gaze on the glory. Nature was called by Thee to be the ally of grace. On that mountain of Thine the secular and the sacred met together and taught together. In that hour I learned that Thou wert no foe to physical beauty. Thy Divine hand was not ashamed to hold the flower of an earthly field. Thy Divine heart was not afraid to wake a natural minstrelsy to co-operate with redeeming love. Thou wert not jealous of my soul's old yearning. Thy heavenly garden was stocked with this world's roses; I thank Thee, O Lord, for the moral of Thy sermon on the hill.

XCIX

THE BONDAGE THAT UNBURDENS

"The law of liberty."—Jas. ii. 12.

THERE are two theories in the world about the human will. One says, "Man is a slave; he is bound hand and foot; he is for ever under law." The other says, "Man is free; he is master of his own actions; law has no dominion over him." St. James suggests terms of peace between the opposing views. He says that each of them assumes something which is wrong—that "to be free" is the opposite of "to be bound." He declares that on the contrary there is such a thing as a "law of liberty"—a compulsion whose very essence consists in the strength of human will. What is this mysterious union of contraries—this law of liberty? It can be expressed in one word—love. Love is at once the most free and the most bound of all

things. We say habitually that one in love is "captivated"—made prisoner. And yet the prison is his own choice. He would not lose his chain for all the world. It is to him a golden chain—the badge not of his servitude but of his empire. It represents the freest thing in his nature—the desire of his heart. My love is my heart's desire, my heart's hunger, my heart's prayer. It is the strongest exercise of will conceivable. Nothing shows the power of my will like my love. It is the power of my personality to pass out of itself and to claim a share in yours—to say, "You are mine." James is right when he says that love is the marriage of opposites—liberty and law. Love is at once the most self-subduing and the most self-revealing of all things. It gives its neck to the yoke; it becomes the slave of its object. It bears another's burden, it stoops to another's service, it carries another's care. But when my heart enters that prison-house it for the first time becomes free. It puts on fetters; but by its fetters it flies. It receives heavy weights; but by its weights it is winged. It contracts stringent ties; but its ties make its treasures. The bonds of love are the source of its boundlessness. Each new chain is a new chariot. I flower by self-forgetfulness. I grow when

underground. I reach the bloom of summer in the burial of self.

Lord, imprison me in Thy love, and I shall fly. My heart has no freedom till it is mastered; it must be captured ere it can take wing. When my heart has no master it has no power of flight, no passion, no pinion. It scales not the heaven, it seeks not the mount, it soars not to meet the morning. It lies in a state of torpor, of death. But when its love comes, it is liberated. When Thou sendest it a master, Thou wakest it into music; the hour of its captivity is the hour of its emancipation. Be Thou the master of my heart, O Lord! Break its independence, and set it free. Captivate it with the sight of Thy beauty! Inspire it with the touch of Thy presence! Kindle it with a sense of Thy glory! The disease of my heart is its failure to find an object; it has no energy when it has no ruler. Be Thou its ruler, O Christ! Wield its sceptre, and it will lose its weakness; wear its crown, and it will be strong; conquer it, and it will be courageous; dominate it, and it will be deathless; enfold it, and it will banish fear. Thy prison will be its power; Thy sway will be its strength; Thy service will be its song. It will find the wings of a dove when it rests in *Thee*. It

will burst into melody when its strings are swept by Thee. It will traverse the flood of waters when its ark is built in Thee. There are no forces so potent as those of my subjugated heart; Thy law of love is perfect liberty.

THE DOOR OF CYRUS

"That the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus."—Ezra i. 1.

BY the minds of the religious people of that age Cyrus would not have been reckoned a religious man. He was not regarded as a worshipper of the same God whom Moses worshipped. In the popular estimation of Israel he was one of the heathen. We should have called him in our day a non-churchgoer, a man who had not attached himself to the Christian communion. Yet this non-churchgoer, this alien from the table of communion, this man outside the pale of God's visible temple, is made the subject of one of the divinest inspirations that ever flashed through a human soul, "The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus." Through that inspiration he published a decree which permitted the

children of Israel to return to their own land. I wonder that with their narrow views the children of Israel did not refuse from such a source the gift of their own liberation. I have known a congregation to reject a very large charitable subscription on the ground that it came from a dealer in the wine trade. The Israelites received a greater boon than that, and from a still more unlikely source. They had been offered a charter of freedom by a foreign king with a foreign religion. Should we not expect that they would have declined to be indebted for their nationality to any faith outside their nation. They did not so decline, and that is to their honour. It looks as if their foreign environment had, for the time being, broadened them. At all events, their experience should broaden *us*. It should teach us that neither God nor His worship nor His inspiration is confined to temples made with hands, that there are more doors to things Divine than man has dreamed of in his philosophy, and that the channels of religious communion are wider and deeper than we know.

My brother, there are many who enter the kingdom by the door of Cyrus—the door that has no number. It is good to enter by the doors that are numbered—by the sanctuary, by

the communion, by the baptismal font, by the study of the Word. But let us not say that these are exhaustive! If I see a man in the temple who has not entered by any known door or any visible window, I feel that there must be a secret passage; I will call it the aperture of Cyrus. Whence have come the myriad voices thou hearest of unbaptized infants in the paradise of God? By the aperture of Cyrus. Whence have come the myriad great souls thou seest in the lands of the heathen? By the aperture of Cyrus. Whence have come the many amiable lives that have not found a resting-place for faith? By the aperture of Cyrus. Whence have come those sacrificial spirits that have not yet ascended the visible steps of God's altar? By the aperture of Cyrus. Whence have come the weariness of the worldling, the pallidness of the pleasure-seeker, the disgust of the debauchee, the self-loathing of the licentious, the satiety of the besotted, the thirst of those without thought of God? By the aperture of Cyrus. The voice of the Lord often cries in the wilderness; let its accents be sacred to thee! Call not the goodness of Cyrus a mere gift of nature; recognise it as God's grace! Though Israel acknowledge him not, deem him not an alien from thy Father!

Consecrate his secret passage! Accept his private door! Canonise his unseen porch into the temple! Though his table is prepared in the wilderness, give him the name of communicant! Though his dove descends in the desert, send him thy message of peace! Though his songs of Bethlehem are only heard by night, admit him to the choir invisible! Breathe for him thy brotherhood! Claim for him thy comradeship! Hold out to him the social hand! Greet him with thy graciousness! Feast him with thy fellowship! Meet him with thy music! Wave to him thy welcome! Brave for him the blame of converse with the alien! Reject not the syren's strain though it come through the door of Cyrus!

CI

CHRIST'S SELECTION FOR THE MOUNT

"Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves." —Mark ix. 2.

THERE are some minds that have moments of religious elevation. I would not say that all religious people have. The large majority are destined for the plain, and find on the plain all that they need. But there are some men who are destined for the valley, and these require moments on the mount. Consider the three in the passage that were so elevated—Peter, James, and John. Is there any point of likeness between these? Yes—they were all bound for the inner circle of Gethsemane. They were to be together in the sharing of Christ's sorrow, and therefore they are brought together in an experience of joy. I used to wonder why the three men taken to the glory of the Mount were the

same three afterwards taken to the sadness of the Garden. I understand it now; it was because they were destined for the Garden that they were carried to the Hill. The lives that most need sunbeams are the lives that are to be called into the inner grounds of Gethsemane. Only these three got there. Among the others there were splendid workers; Andrew was a finder of men, and Philip a political economist, and Matthew a dispenser of Christian hospitality. But just on *account* of their work they had less time to feel; the urgency of labour precluded the entrance of depression. Peter, James, and John were all destined for the burdens of the soul rather than the burdens of the body. Peter was to weep over his sin. James was to die a martyr in life's morning. John was to bear in Patmos an exile by a lonely sea. They were all coming to states of mind in which work would be impossible and which would require another aid than the plain. And so Jesus took them up to the mountain. He gave them a draught of delight in anticipation of the day of darkness. He gave them a sight of the sunbeam, a glimpse of the glory, a cluster of the grapes of Canaan. He said in effect: "It will be a sustaining memory to you in the coming days. When the pillar

of cloud is around you, you shall have a pillar of fire behind you. You shall live by the light of yesterday; you shall glow with the sunshine of the past. The songs of the morning shall be with you in the night; the air of the mountain shall be with you in the dungeon; the remembrance of the music shall be with you in the battle's roar."

Lord, I thank Thee for my glimpses on the hill; it is by these I conquer in Gethsemane. Nothing but joy can conquer sorrow. I can triumph *through* the cross, but never *by* the cross. Even in *Thy* cross Thy victory came from Thy peace—from the joy already laid up in Thy heart. I could never bear my hour in the valley were it not for the memory of my hour on the height. There is an angel that comes to strengthen me, and that angel comes from the past. I remember the days of old, and I refuse to let my spirit touch the lowest ground. I should be consumed but for my yesterdays—the retrospects of Thy love. Therefore, O Lord, I prize my glimpses on the hill. Men tell me they are valueless—only coming that they may pass away. Yes; but it is when they pass away that they are strong. It is in *memory* they are mighty. I never know their power till they are gone. The songs of the noon come

back to me in the night. The rose of the dawn returns to me at dusk. The view from the hill supports me in the hollow. Send me Thy draught for the desert! Pour me Thy wine for the weariness! Gird me with strength for my struggle! Arm me with peace for my Patmos! Bring me a flower for life's fading! Light me a torch for earth's tunnel! Nerve me with calm for my crosses! Fill me with joy for my journey! One breath of Thy mountain air will keep me all the day.

CII

THE TEMPORARY LOSS INVOLVED IN ETERNAL GAIN

"The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith, Is not this the Christ?"—JOHN iv. 28, 29.

THE leaving behind of the pitcher was an act of forgetfulness. It was a forgetfulness of something which half an hour before had engrossed her whole attention. She has come to draw water—to provide for the secular wants of daily life. She has filled the pitcher and is about to carry it home. Suddenly she meets Jesus and hears something that fascinates her. She forgets all about the pitcher—about her long walk to fill it and the trouble she has had in the process. She leaves it behind as though it were of no consequence to her; she flies back to the city on the wings of a new thought. The leaving behind of the pitcher was a lapse of memory on her part. Lapses of memory are often referred to mental weakness;

I think the larger number come from mental strength—absorption in a deeper interest. It is often charged against revival movements that they withdraw our minds from common and useful things. In the keenness of the new pursuit the pitcher may be unfilled or it may be filled and left behind at the well. I have frequently heard critics animadvert on the home deshabille of those engrossed in religious meetings. But if the religion be sincere, that is a mere temporary disorder; it will not last This woman would find the pitcher again, and she would be a better drawer of water ever afterward. She would find that the new interest would not only make room for the old but intensify the value of the old. Had not the drawing of the water already been consecrated! Had not this humble secular act ministered to the thirsty lips of the Son of Man! With such an association, could it ever be secular any more! The site of a great victory may be only a village hamlet; but the victory makes it immortal. The consecration of this cup to Christ made it sacramental. Her going to the well would nevermore be common or unclean. It would thenceforth be always a sacred duty, a Church service, a work for the sanctuary. It would be as solemn to her as a prayer. The place of household sustenance would be holy;

she would always expect, when she went to the well, to meet a Christ there.

Lord, when I meet Thee, do not let me leave my pitcher for long behind! Insignificant as it seems, it may yet perform a service to *Thee.* Often in my moment of elevated rapture I have said, "Let me forget the things of the day and of the dust!" And by and by there has come a thorn. The troubles of the home have called me down from the mount. Common duties, prosaic demands, domestic needs, have clamoured for a hearing; the cloud has interrupted the vision of Moses and Elias and Thee. I call that cloud my thorn, and it makes me fret. I cry within my soul, "Why, after having seen Thee, should I be sent back to my pitcher at the well!" Teach me to thank Thee for the thorn just *because* it sends me back! Teach me that this life below was not made to be left behind! Teach me that the pitcher at the well was not intended to be broken when the new vision came, but rather to become a vessel of Thy sanctuary, a cup for Thy communion! Forbid that Thy light should irradiate only my *mountains!* Let it come down, O Lord—down to street and lane, down to mart and alley! May it warm the household hearth; may it prepare the morning meal; may it provide the daily dinner; may it trim the twilight torch; may it tune the social song;

may it prompt congenial converse; may it wake melodious mirth; may it lift financial fogs; may it cheer business embarrassments; may it revive heavy hearts; may it guide panting pilgrims to the well! Let me resume for Thee the pitcher I have left behind!

CIII

THE PLACE IN CHRIST FOR REPENTANCE

"Jesus saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He saith unto him, Follow Me."—MATT. ix. 9.

THERE is one peculiarity with which I have been struck in the calls of Jesus; they are not preceded by any denunciation of the man's past life. The Baptist's *were;* his initial cry is, "Repent!" Jesus, indeed, calls to a life which *involves* repentance; but repentance is not His initial cry. Not even is it so in the parable of the prodigal son; the Father gives His demonstration of love before any expression of sin on the part of the prodigal. He sees him afar off, He has compassion, He runs across the intervening space to meet him, He folds him in His arms and lavishes on him His affection ere ever one word of contrition falls from his lips. In the case of Matthew we should have expected the first note of Jesus to have been reproach.

Matthew had been living voluntarily the life of a slave. He had become the truculent servant of Roman masters and had wrung for them the tribute from his countrymen. Should we not expect the first cry of Jesus to have been, "Think shame of yourself!" It is not; it is, "Follow Me!" Can we account for this? Yes, it shows His profound wisdom and how much deeper He sees than the world sees. The world thinks that a man begins by repenting and then turns to follow the right way. It is the reverse. He begins by following the right way and then he repents of being so long on the wrong one. It is not our sorrow for the past that leads us to form a beautiful ideal; it is our reception of a beautiful ideal that leads us to sorrow for the past. Matthew does not say, "I have led an ignoble life and must now see Christ"; he says, "I have seen Christ, and therefore I know that my life has been ignoble." God's first season for every converted man is the summer. He is not at once shown the winter of his own soul; he is plunged at first into the Divine radiance. He only learns his rags by seeing the new garment that is to clothe him. He never knows his pool to be stagnant till he stands by the great sea. It is when the waves wash his feet, when the spray refreshes his countenance, when the swell of ocean murmurs in his ear, that he remembers

the inland pool of yesterday and cries, "These were not living waters!"

Lord, let mine be the call of Matthew—the call into summer radiance! Let me not say within my heart, "I dare not come; I have not a sufficient sense of my own inadequacy"! Teach me that the sense of my own inadequacy can only be born in Thy light, only perfected in heaven! I have always thought the knowledge of my sin a *beginner's* lesson; reveal to me that it is the lesson for the highest class of Christian! I shall only become dissatisfied when I reach Thy grace; therefore let Thy grace be my earliest seeking! Let me not begin by trying to feel my corruption! Let not my first journey be an inspection of my own quagmire! Let it be a flight over the ocean of Thy love! Let me soar at once to the crystal fountain, to the river of life, to the streets of gold! Let not my opening thought be of my tabernacles of clay; let it fly up to the gates of pearl and the rainbow of emerald and the skies without night! Make not my first voyage retrospective; let me begin, not with the past, but with the future! Let the earliest voice I hear be the voice Matthew heard —"Follow Me"! Be *Thou* my beginning, O Lord! Let me enter Thy temple by the gate called Beautiful! Bring me at once into Thy summer, to-day into Thy paradise! Wait not

for my weeping, tarry not for my tears, delay not till I feel my destitution! Clothe me *now* in the garments of Thy righteousness! Lead me instantaneously from darkness into light! Bear me at a bound into the centre of Thy bosom! Then for the first time I shall mourn my meanness, then for the first time I shall know my nothingness; for I shall read my retrospect in the glow and I shall detect my discord in the music. I shall find my own measure when I have followed *Thee.*

CIV

THE CONTENTMENT THAT IS UNSPIRITUAL

"Men of the world have their portion in this life; as for me, I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness."—Psa. xvii. 14, 15.

THE idea evidently is that the difference between the man of the world and the man of God lies in the amount of their ambition. The popular notion is that the worldly man is more ambitious than the unworldly. The psalmist says it is exactly the reverse. He says, "Worldly men have their portion in this life—are quite satisfied with what they can get here; as for me, who am supposed to represent the other side, I shall never be content with anything here—I shall only be satisfied when I awake in the likeness of the Almighty." I suppose it is equivalent to saying that the mark of a child of God is his eternal thirst—his perpetual reaching toward a goal which,

because it is infinite, can never be attained below. This comparison of worldliness and unworldliness, though so very ancient, is exceedingly novel. It is in apparent contradiction to the phrase, "the pride of life." If, as St. John says, worldliness is pride, how can the psalmist say that it is the absence of ambition? Is it not a state of soaring, of looking up, of unsatisfiedness? No, my brother; its danger is just that it is not. Every proud man is a satisfied man; in so far as he is ambitious there is an element of humility left within him. Pride, as such, never soars. It is the consciousness of being already on the mountain-top and looking down. We speak familiarly of "treading the mountains of vanity." Yes, but it is of "treading," not "climbing." Vanity is always on the summit. Its eye ever rests on something beneath it. It sees no height, no eminence, no pinnacle beyond it. It enjoys the downward gaze. It cannot exist with an upward gaze. To see a region above it, would be its death; it can only live so long as it can say, "I have much goods laid up for many days." Those who tread the mountains of vanity are not the men who aspire to high things. They are those who, like Alexander, see no more worlds to conquer, who have reached the uttermost peak of expectation and scaled the farthest limit of

desire. Their flight is over; their climbing is ended; their goal of ambition is won; and they have now only to feel their superiority by the privilege of looking down.

Be not mine this life, O Lord! There is too little ambition in it for me, too little aspiration, too little sight of the high places. I want to have something to look forward to. I want to have the child's sense of to-morrow, and the joy of it. I would not have the peace of autumn, whose very fulness precludes the promise of more, whose very satisfaction prevents the hope of to-morrow. Be mine, rather, the primrose which is all promise and nothing fulfilled! Be mine, rather, the child-life, which sees the kingdom all to come and stretches empty hands to receive its gifts! Be mine, rather, the view from the valley where everything is seen by looking up and the landscape appeals to my lowliness! Though I walk through the valley I shall fear no evil, though I pass through the shadow I shall fear no dismay; for the valley is the voice of my aspiring, and the shadow is the promise of my shining. Thou hast given to everything its own form of rest. Not all things can rest in quietude. The rest of the brook is its babbling and the rest of the river is its running and the rest of the sea is its swelling. So also hast

Thou made quietude not the rest of my soul. Its rest comes only when it is on the wing. Its peace is its upward pinion; it flowers by its flight. The world prizes the sense of fulness; the soul asks of Thee the sense of emptiness and the sight of the coming goal. Ever show me a height beyond; ever point me to a world to come! Wing me by my wants! Stimulate me by my shortcomings! Inspire me by my insufficiency! Propel me by my conscious poverty! Call me by my clouds! Guide me by the grey that dims the gold! My hope of future mansions is my house unfinished here; I shall learn my destiny by the unsatisfiedness of my soul.

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